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ABSTRACT

Ten demonstration grants were awarded to public school systems throughout the state of Minnesota to develop expanded early childhood family education (ECFE) programs that integrate the roles of families, teachers, and social services in serving children in kindergarten through third grade and their families. This report provides an overview of the 10 pilot programs; reviews major strategies of the programs; lists benefits of the programs for children and parents; and examines barriers to the implementation of the programs. The report also describes some of the details involved in implementing expanded ECFE programs; reviews research on parental involvement in programs that support children's school successes and reduce children's chance of experiencing problems with alcohol and other drugs; discusses program participants' satisfaction with the programs; and offers eight recommendations related to ECFE programs in Minnesota. The research reviewed overwhelmingly supports the involvement of parents in any effort aimed at preventing problems which place children at risk, and ECFE programs appear to have extraordinary potential as a vehicle for involving parents in primary prevention. Appendices include a 22-item bibliography, copies of surveys used in gathering data about the 10 pilot programs, and extensive descriptions of the 10 programs. These descriptions, which comprise more than half the document, present information on programs' target populations, agencies participating in the programs, components and evaluation of the programs, recruitment of programs' participants, the relationship of programs to drug abuse prevention, benefits of programs, and barriers to the implementation of programs. (BC)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION

K-3 EXPANSION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

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a report to the Minnesota Department of Education on ten pilot sites

Harding, Bright & Associates
December 1992

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a report to the Minnesota Department of Education on ten pilot sites

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December 1991

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Executive Summary

Minnesota has been a national leader in the development of early childhood family education programs, beginning with the first pilot ECFE projects in 1974. Nearly every school district in Minnesota has now implemented programs to serve parents and their pre-school age children.

In 1990, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated funds to the Department of Education to "develop expanded early childhood family education programs that effectively integrate the roles of families, regular classroom teachers, and community-based social services...for children who are in kindergarten through grade 3 and their families."

The intent of this initiative was to answer two basic questions: 1) *Is the Early Childhood Family Education model an effective way to reach families with children in grades K-3?* and *2) Is this model helpful for families with young children who are potentially at greater risk for difficulties in school or for alcohol and other drug use problems?*

Ten demonstration grants were awarded to public school systems throughout the state. The sites selected to receive these grants represented urban, suburban and rural communities. Although most of the projects served the K-3 population, two chose to implement programs for K-1; one worked with K-2; and one combined funds with the district chemical health project to serve all K-5 children and their families.

The information in this report is a compilation of the experiences, ideas, questions, and reflections of those who were involved in the ten pilot programs. In all, nearly 450 people shared their thoughts about these programs, including eighty elementary school-age children.

The full report includes a description of the ten pilot sites, an overview of the major program strategies; the benefits of the programs; and the barriers encountered as the programs were implemented.

It also describes some of the programmatic details involved in Expanded ECFE programs, including the structure, membership and function of advisory groups; recruiting participants; creating a connection with elementary school programs; and maintaining communication with elementary school staff members. It also compares the Expanded ECFE programs to 0-5 ECFE programs in terms of philosophy, format, participants and staffing.

As a part of the legislation that established Early Childhood Family Education Expanded K-3 Programs, the Commissioner of Education was directed to "evaluate the effectiveness of the expanded early childhood and family education program as a component of the drug prevention initiative."

The research we reviewed overwhelmingly supports the involvement of parents in any effort aimed at preventing problems which place children — and learners — at risk. Parental involvement is seen as instrumental in improving children's opportuni-

ties for success in school, and in reducing the chance that children will experience problems with alcohol and other drugs.

Early Childhood Family Education programs in general, and Expanded ECFE programs in particular, appear to have extraordinary potential as a vehicle for involving parents in primary prevention. This report gives a rationale for including Expanded ECFE programs as a component of prevention efforts, describes the prevention strategies used in the pilot sites, and examines the strategies used from the perception of ECFE staff, other school and agency professionals, and parents.

Through our research and the site review process we have come to believe that Expanded ECFE programs are an effective way to increase parental involvement in education, to reach "high risk" families, and to engage parents in the primary prevention of alcohol and other drug use problems. It appears that the expenditure of funds is well worth the investment. We therefore make the following eight recommendations, which are further elaborated in the full report.

1: Continue funding Expanded ECFE programs

2: Maintain sponsorship of Expanded ECFE programs through the Minnesota Department of Education's Early Childhood Family Education Program.

3: Promote the concept of "universal access" for Expanded ECFE Programs while extending special efforts to recruit "high risk" or "hard-to-reach" families.

4: Encourage diversity in programming to meet the developmental needs of elementary-age children and their parents.

5: Link Expanded ECFE programs to prevention efforts for alcohol and other drug use problems and other at-risk areas.

6: Budget sufficient time to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with other groups in the community

7: Support and enhance the Expanded ECFE programs through continued inservice training opportunities

8: Seek ways to involve children and parents in planning and delivering Expanded ECFE services

ECFE K-3 Expansion Demonstration Projects: Introduction

A (Very) Brief History of Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education

Minnesota has long been a leader in the development of early childhood family education programs. In a review of state-sponsored family education, the Harvard Family Research Project gave credit to Minnesota not only as a pioneer, but as the largest state-sponsored parent education and family support programs program in the country. (Hausman & Weiss, 1988)

Minnesota's history of Early Childhood Family Education began in 1973 when the first ECFE bill was introduced to the Minnesota legislature. The first pilot projects were initiated in 1974 and others were added in subsequent years, but it was not until nearly ten years later that per capita aid funding allowed more wide-scale adoption of the early successful ECFE models. By 1990, 340 school districts, encompassing 96% of the 0-4 population, had implemented Early Childhood Family Education programs. (Engstrom, 1990)

From the beginning, Minnesota also made a significant commitment to evaluation, both for accountability and for improvement. According to Cornell Researcher Irving Lazar (1988), "A variety of approaches to evaluation was tried during the formative years of the program, so that there is now a sense of what's feasible and what's likely to be useful... Minnesota will be able to demonstrate to the rest of the country the ways in which this kind of parental education and support for the development of children is, or is not, effective."

The Expanded Early Childhood Family Education (K-3) Program

In 1990, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated funds to the Department of Education to "develop expanded early childhood family education programs that effectively integrate the roles of families, regular classroom teachers, and community-based social services... for children who are in kindergarten through grade 3 and their families."

The intent of this initiative was to answer two basic questions: *1) Is the Early Childhood Family Education model an effective way to reach families with children in grades K-3?* and *2) Is this model helpful for families with young children who are potentially at greater risk for difficulties in school or for alcohol and other drug use problems?* Ten demonstration grants were awarded to public school systems throughout the state.

The legislature also appropriated funds for evaluating these projects in order to:

- Identify characteristics, components and strategies that are effective in Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs
- Identify themes and strategies across education prevention programs that are effective
- Make recommendations for future education prevention programming based on an analysis of the evaluation data

The Evaluation Process

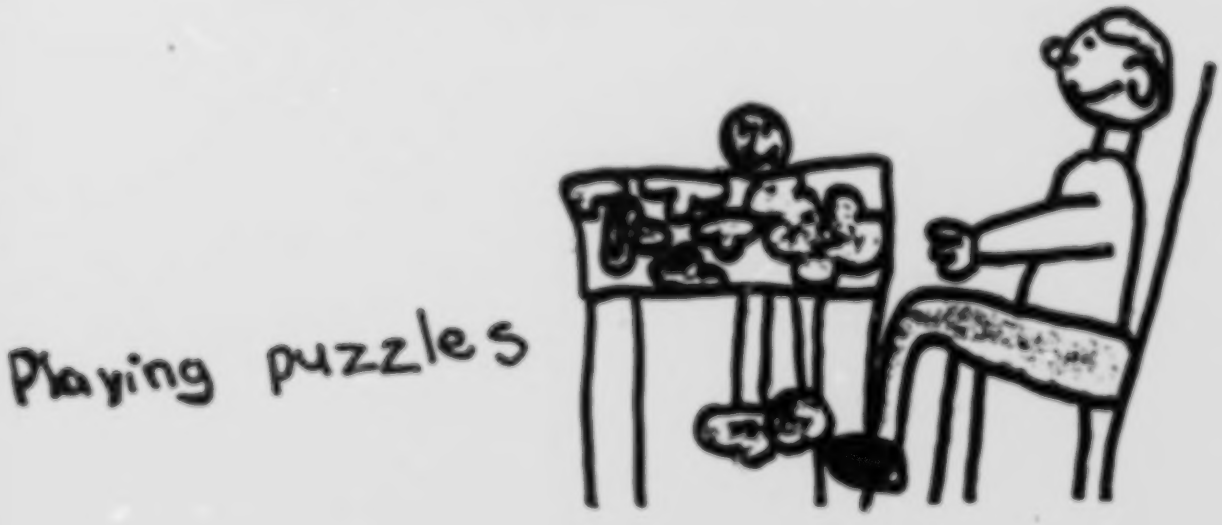
In January, ECFE K-3 grant recipients met with Minnesota Department of Education staff and the evaluation team to share information about their programs and to help design the evaluation process. At this meeting, participants described elements they had in common with other sites and elements which made them unique, and suggested questions they would like to have answered about ECFE K-3 programs. Subsequent phone conversations and correspondence with program coordinators led to an evaluation design which included:

1) interviews with ECFE K-3 staff and project coordinators
2) interviews with school administrators, social service agency representatives, and school chemical health coordinators
3) focus groups with advisory committees, parents, and children
4) questionnaires for school staff and community agency personnel
5) questionnaires for parents

All design elements were centered on the set of questions asked by program coordinators and Minnesota Department of Education staff, along with other questions that arose during the time the evaluators were reviewing research on parental involvement programs.

At the end of the school year, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review at each of the ten project locations. During this visit, 169 ECFE staff and other school/agency professionals, 80 children and 103 parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. Questionnaires were also completed by 58 ECFE staff members, 140 other professionals, and 241 parents.

The information in this report is a compilation of the experiences, ideas, questions, and reflections of those who were involved in the ten pilot Expanded ECFE programs. Without their cooperation and candidness, this report could not have been prepared. Without their insights, valuable information about the value of expanding ECFE to serve K-3 parents and children would have been lost. It is our hope that this report, along with the individual reports on each of the ten pilot programs, will serve as a springboard for new Expanded ECFE programs.



Section 1: The Ten Pilot Sites

Introduction

The ten sites selected to receive the first Expanded ECFE grants represented urban, suburban and rural communities. Two projects served more than one school district and three served more than one county. Although most of the projects served the K-3 population, two chose to implement programs for K-1; one worked with K-2; and one combined funds with the district chemical health project to serve all K-5 children and their families. This section provides a snapshot of the ten projects.

Forest Lake: "K-1-2-3"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Bonnie Kirkpatrick and Cynthia Berding*
Organization: ..... *Early Childhood Family Education*
Address: ..... *1007 W. Broadway, Forest Lake, MN 55025*
Phone Number: ..... *(612) 464-1100*

Project Overview

The Forest Lake ECFE program serves the district's seven elementary schools (Scandia, Columbus, Wyoming, Forest View, Linwood, Forest Lake, and Lino Lakes). The school district covers over 240 square miles. The "K-1-2-3" program was designed to "integrate the roles of families, school personnel, and social service agencies with the long term objective of increasing the child's chances of school success and reducing the child's potential for drug abuse." Each school building was given some flexibility with overall coordination provided by the ECFE(K-3) Coordinator.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access." All K-3 children and their parents and families were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Special efforts were made to recruit "high risk" or "at-risk" children and families. Referrals came from classroom teachers, the Chapter/CHAMP (Chapter I, Assurance of Mastery) staff, school counselors, and the STAR (Students At Risk) teams at each school.

Freshwater Education District: "Connect"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Mary Jo Hofer*
Organization: ..... *Freshwater Education District*
Address: ..... *HCR#3, Box 15-1, Staples, MN 56479*
Phone Number: ..... *(218) 894-2439*

Project Overview

The Freshwater ECFE program serves the nine elementary schools covered by the education district (Bertha-Hewitt, Browerville, Clarissa, Eagle Bend, Long Prairie, Motley, Parkers Prairie, Pillager, and Staples). The goal of the "Connect" program was to strengthen parenting knowledge and skills so as to "enhance the K-1 child's learning, development, and attitude." The program was designed to reach out to families living within the nine participating school districts to connect families, schools, and communities in a way that enhanced each child's membership in the family, school, and community.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access." Because Freshwater serves nine communities, the ECFE program requested funding to serve K-1 grades instead of K-3. All parents and families of children in grades K-1 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Classroom teachers, administrators, and social service agencies were also encouraged to recruit families they felt could especially benefit from this program. Special phone calls were made to "high risk" families. There was clearly a variance in how extensive the efforts were in each of the nine schools, with one school almost exclusively recruiting "high risk" children and their parents.

Monticello: "Parent Involvement Program"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Pam Lindberg and Kay Douglass*
Organization: ..... *Monticello School District*
Address: ..... *Box 897, Monticello, MN 55362*
Phone Number: ..... *(612) 295-2925*

Project Overview

The Monticello ECFE program serves Monticello's Pinewood East and West elementary schools. When the Monticello Community Education Chemical Health and Wellness Task Force also received funds to provide parenting information to parents of school age children, resources were pooled to serve the entire elementary school (K-5). The resulting "Parent Involvement Program" was designed to provide parenting information to parents of school-age children, using the QUEST parent component as a basis.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All parents and families of children in grades K-5 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Classroom teachers and administrators were asked to provide a list of the families they felt could benefit from this program, and this list was used as a basis for providing special invitations to parents. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify "high risk" families.

Moorhead: "Literacy and Parenting Partnership"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Lauri Winterfeldt-Shanks*
Organization: ..... *Moorhead Public Schools*
Address: ..... *Townsite Center, 810 - 4th Ave. S., Moorhead, MN 56560*
Phone Number: ..... *(218) 233-2499*

Project Overview

Through this project, the Moorhead ECFE program conducted a pilot program at Thomas Edison Elementary School. The "Literacy and Parenting Program" was designed to provide after-school field trips, homework help for students after school, and afternoon programs on literacy and parenting for parents. This program did not use the typical ECFE parent/child interaction format.

Targeted Populations

The program was open to any family with children K-3 within the Thomas Edison School area. However, priority was given to parents who wanted to improve their literacy and parenting skills. The program was tightly connected to Chapter 1 and "English as a Second Language (ESL)" programs at Thomas Edison and concentrated on offering services to Hispanic families. Referrals to this program were made almost exclusively through the school system.

"...a great success for me because it helped me realize my own faults and help better my children's self worth." — Monticello parent

Proctor-Hermantown: "Family Connection"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Claudia Otis, Lucy Carlson, Lynn Haglin*
Address: ..... *131 - 9th St., Proctor, MN 55810*
Phone Number: ..... *(218)-624-4869*

Project Overview

The Proctor-Hermantown ECFE program serves both Proctor and Hermantown elementary schools. The "Family Connection" program was designed to "demonstrate that providing educational support services to parents will enable them to help their children access a solid foundation for lifelong growth and development through a process whereby parents will experience less stress and greater enjoyment in their childrearing." Key aspects program aspects were structured parent/child educational programs, deliberate attempts to increase communication between families and schools, and in-service training for staff members.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All parents and families of children in grades K-3 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Classroom teachers and administrators were also asked to refer families they felt could especially benefit from this program. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify "high risk" families.

Robbinsdale

Program Coordinator: ..... *Kerry Froehlich and Delores Fletcher*
Organization: ..... *Independent School District 281 (Robbinsdale Area Schools)*
Address: ..... *4148 Winnetka Avenue North, New Hope, MN 55427*
Phone Number: *612-537-2270*

Project Overview

The Robbinsdale ECFE program serves children and their families at three Robbinsdale elementary schools: Cavanagh, Lincoln, and Northport. At each school children at a different grade level and their families were invited to program activities. The program was developed "to help parents recognize and meet the emotional, intellectual, physical and social needs of children, to promote healthy self-concept development among all family members, to provide a forum for parents to share and learn a variety of child-rearing approaches and to provide learning experiences for parents and children."

"At-risk families are empowered. Their input is taken seriously and attended to — helping them take charge to start to solve their own problems." — Winona school counselor

Targeted Populations

This program generally followed the concept of "universal access". Children and their families from the 5's Alive program at Cavanagh, the 1st grade at Lincoln, and the 2nd grade at Northport were invited to program activities. Classroom teachers, principals and social workers provided referrals of families they felt could especially benefit from this program. Such families were given special invitations via priority phone calls to these parents, and appointments for home or school visits for these families. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify individual "at-risk" families, however, classroom performance and lack of parental involvement were two major factors for teacher referrals. Two schools were selected for this program because they had the highest percentage of children and families who were considered at-risk. At-risk factors were considered part of the criteria for being involved in programs at the third school.

St. Paul: "Families and School Together"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Elaine Riegel-Barth and Patricia Copa*
Organization: ..... *St. Paul Public Schools Community Education*
Address: ..... *360 Colborne, St. Paul, MN 55102*
Phone Number: ..... *(612) 293-5275*

Project Overview

This program was initially intended to serve two St. Paul magnet elementary schools, Jackson and Maxfield. However, because of reduced funding, the ECFE(K-3) program was only conducted at the Jackson elementary school. "Families and School Together" was designed to help strengthen families and to help parents assist in their child(ren)'s learning to increase school success and decrease alcohol and other drug misuse.

Targeted Populations

Most program activities followed the "universal access" philosophy. All children and their families at Jackson elementary school were invited to program activities. However, some activities were offered for groups with special needs, such as classes for Hmong and other Southeast Asian families.

The school is designated as a total Chapter 1 school because 75% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Efforts were made to encourage participation from families at believed to be most at-risk. Community liaisons were used to call families and invite to activities and school staff members made some referrals. No specific assessment tools were used to identify individual "at-risk" families.

Waseca: "Home-School Partnership"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Karen Krause and John Jensen*
Organization: ..... *Waseca ECFE*
Address: ..... *605 - 7th Ave. N.E., Waseca, MN*
Phone Number: ..... *(507) 835-5626*

Project Overview

The Waseca ECFE program serves the three elementary schools within the Waseca School District (Hartley, Southside and Sacred Heart). The "Home - School Partnership" program was designed to enrich and expand students' knowledge base, encourage parental involvement, improve and enhance family communication, and increase communication between school and families.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All parents and families of children in grades K-3 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Special efforts were made to recruit children and families for special support/education groups that focussed on stress, school or family concerns. District specialists (counselors, special education and classroom teachers), Waseca County Social Services and the interagency committee made referrals for families who they felt would benefit from program components. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify "high risk" families.

Winona: K-3 Expansion Grant Program

Program Coordinator: ..... *Karen Fawcett*
Organization: ..... *Winona Early Childhood Family Education*
Address: ..... *654 Huff St., Winona, MN 55987*
Phone Number: ..... *(507) 454-9438*

"As busy as things always seem to be these days, I think it is important to spend some one-on-one unhurried time with our children. The program gave use the chance that we might not have had otherwise." — Worthington parent

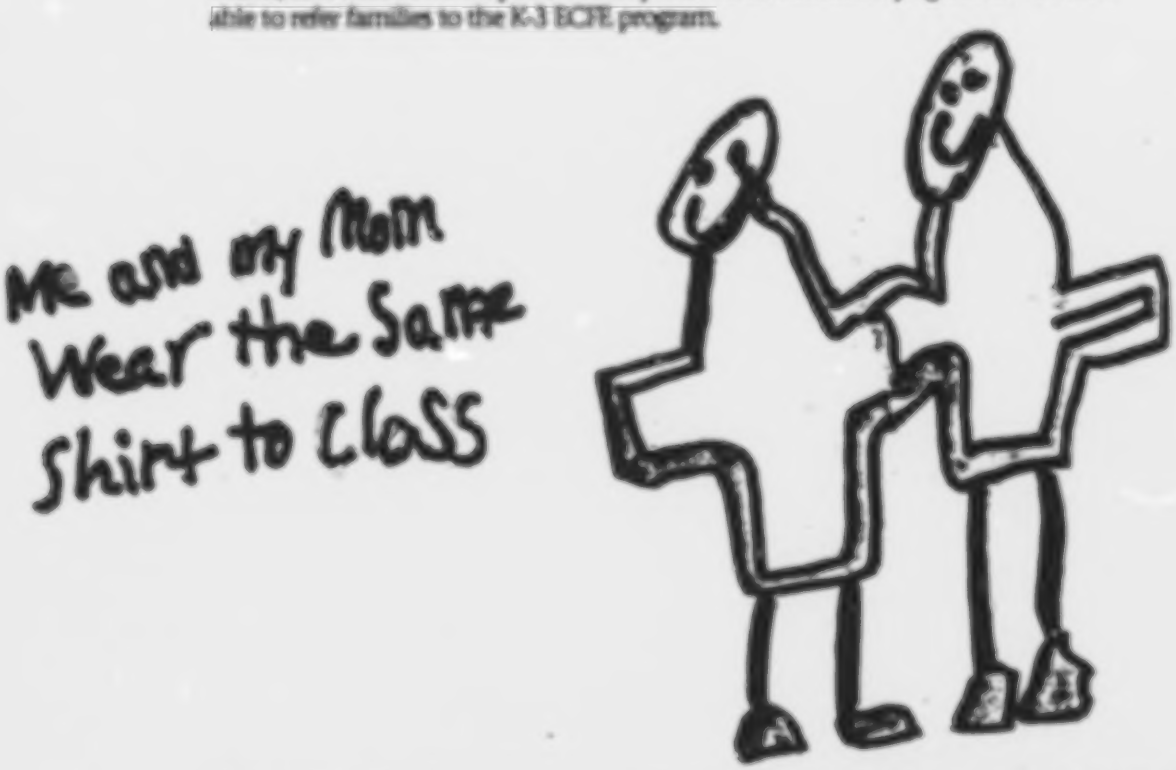
Project Overview

The Winona ECFE(K-3) program serves children and families in Jefferson and Washington-Kosciusko (W-K) elementary schools. The K-3 expansion program was modeled after the 0-5 Winona ECFE program and included a wide variety of components to reach all types of families.

The premise of the program was that poverty, illiteracy, abuse, neglect, family stress and chemical abuse are "at the deeper roots of school failure" and families who overcome these will be more active in their child(ren)'s education. The program built on the strengths of individual family members.

Targeted Populations

Some activities and classes offered by this program were open to all families. Certain activities and classes were targeted to particular population groups. Referrals were based on four types of problems for children: 1) aggressive, noncompliant behavior; 2) a life crisis such as death or divorce; 3) neglect or lacking parental supervision; and 4) depression or withdrawal. Nearly one-half of the families served in this K-3 Expansion program were referred by elementary schools. Both Jefferson and Washington-Kosciusko elementary schools have higher percentages of at-risk families. Both are Chapter 1 schools and have families from low income housing projects, apartments, and mobile home parks. County and other community agencies were also able to refer families to the K-3 ECFE program.



Harding, Ringholer & Associates, 1991

Worthington: "K-1 Connection"

Program Coordinator: ..... *Jean Bastian*
Organization: ..... *Early Childhood Family Education*
Address: ..... *2011 Nobles Street, Worthington, MN 56187*
Phone Number: ..... *(507) 376-9188*

"It seems that as children get older they are not as dependent on their parents and the ECFE program helps parents and kids keep in touch in a special way."
Worthington parent

Project Overview

The Worthington ECFE program serves kindergarten and first grade children and their families in Worthington's two public and two private elementary schools. The "K-1 Connection" program was developed to provide parenting education and promote parental involvement in their child(ren)'s education, particularly for parents with at-risk students.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the "universal access" philosophy. This program elected to be open to all families with children in kindergarten or first grade because the changes for children and their families during these grades are often great. Limiting the program to these grades was also done to keep the program focused and manageable.

Classroom teachers identified students at-risk and made referrals of families they felt could especially benefit from the "K-1 Connection" classes. It was not apparent that specific assessment tools were used to identify individual "at-risk" families. Some classroom teachers also did home visits with some of the identified families to help make families more comfortable with school staff members and to help teachers understand family situations.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) Coordinator visited Laotian, Spanish, and Vietnamese families and would refer them to the K-1 Connection program. Promotional material for the program were produced in Lao, Vietnamese, and Spanish for non-English speaking families.

Section 2: Program Strategies

Introduction

According to the original request for proposals from the Minnesota Department of Education, the Expanded ECFE project "allows for great creativity and innovation... an opportunity to try new approaches and discover what works and what does not for this expanded population of children and their families."

Eight Program Strategies — Overview

We found tremendous diversity in the methods and approaches they used. This section provides an overview of the eight major strategies used in the ten Expanded ECFE programs:

Special Events

These were one-time events, usually held for parents and children together, but sometimes offered for parents only. Special events varied widely, encouraging parents and/or children to have fun together, to learn about a particular topic, to supplement classroom learning, to become more familiar with the child's current or upcoming classroom, or to attend a cultural or educational event in the community. Of the parents we surveyed, 76% had attended special events.

Ongoing Classes for Parents Only

These were classes held at least three times, which concentrated on such topics as parenting, alcohol and other drug prevention, or child development. Of the parents we surveyed, 17% had attended ongoing classes for parents only.

Ongoing Classes for Parents and Children Together

These were classes held at least three times for the same group of parents and children together. The topics chosen for these classes varied widely depending on the needs of the age group and the community. Of the parents we surveyed, 52% had attended ongoing classes for parents and children together.

Parent Support Groups

"I wish my other three children could have experienced what my youngest son and I have had with this program. I am so involved in the school now and I really enjoy it." — Freshwater parent

These groups were also ongoing, but had support rather than education as their primary focus. Of the parents we surveyed, 11% had attended parent support groups.

Child Support Groups

These groups also had support rather than education as their primary focus. They generally meet during the school day for groups of children with special concerns. (We did not ask parents to indicate whether or not their children had attended a child's support group.)

Resource Materials

Although some of the programs had actual resource centers for parents and families, others provided resource materials as a part of the class or as "take-home" kits. Of the parents we surveyed, 19% had used resource materials.

Home Visits

Much more than a simple recruitment method, home visits provided support and encouragement to families and often were a primary method for connecting families with social and/or educational services within the community. Of the parents we surveyed, 5% had received home visits.

Family Counseling

None of the programs offered formal family counseling as a strategy. However, bridges to family counseling were made for some families, and informal family counseling happened when parents attended activities or events where skilled professional social service people were present. Of the parents we surveyed, 2% had participated in family counseling.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of the eight strategies, special events, ongoing classes for parents and children together, and resource materials received the highest percentage of responses from both ECFE staff and other professionals.

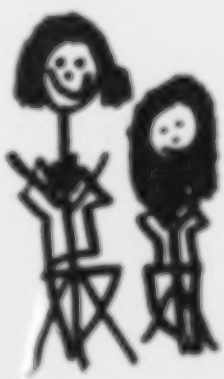
Table 1 shows the percentage of ECFE staff members and other professionals who gave a strategy a 3 or 4 rating (on a scale of one to four, with four indicating "very effective").

"Home visits helped me find resources and figure out what was normal behavior and what was caused by stress of divorce." — Winona parent

Table 1: Program Strategies

Percentage of ECFE Staff and Other Professionals who Rated the Strategy as a "3" or "4"

Strategy	ECFE Staff	Other Prof.
Special Events	79%	78%
Parents only classes (3 or more consecutive)	62%	65%
Parents/children classes (3 or more consecutive)	93%	78%
Parent Support Groups	64%	58%
Child Support Groups	52%	47%
Resource Materials	81%	73%
Home Visits	33%	43%
Family Counseling	26%	30%



Section 3: Benefits

Introduction

At least three groups in nearly every community were willing and eager to talk about the benefits of Expanded ECFE programs. Program advisory groups, parents, and children participated in focus groups which helped us find out what they liked about the programs. This section gives each group's perception of benefits and describes a few unexpected benefits as perceived by ECFE and other school staff members.

Benefits Identified By Advisory Groups

Each advisory group was asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program for their community. The following were the most common responses. Also indicated is the number of advisory groups who listed this benefit, and the number who placed it in the top five benefits.

Creates a link between families and school

(6 listed; 6 in top 5)

It is clear that this was a major objective for many programs. Many project names reflect this benefit in their title (i.e., "Family Connection", "Connect", "Parent Involvement Program", "Literacy and Parenting Partnership", "Families and School Together", "Home-School Partnership", "K-1 Connection").

This benefit was expressed in several different ways: "This project created a partnership between parents and teachers based on shared responsibility, accountability, and mutual respect." "Teacher involvement in the program has led to more understanding of parents and families, and more cooperative relationships." "The message is given from the school — the family is important." "There is less us and them and more we."

Parent education

(8 listed; 5 in top 5)

The Early Childhood Family Education philosophy is reflected in some ways this benefit was expressed: "Parents learned about their strengths." "Parents learned about child development and how to handle behavioral problems." "Parents now have increased confidence in parenting." There were a wide variety of parenting education topics addressed, among them: family relationships, communication, learning styles, child development and alcohol and other drug education.

Quality time between parents and child

(7 listed; 5 in top 5)

The advisory groups said that the Expanded ECFE programs gave parents "one-to-one time (uninterrupted, non-threatening) with their child." They said that this time was helpful for families and children to get to know each other, and that it strengthened the connection between parents and their children.

Parental support for each other
(5 listed; 5 in top 5)

Advisory group members said that parents found out that they were not the only ones dealing with certain issues, and that they found out how to handle problems by talking with other parents.

Parents feel more comfortable coming to school
(6 listed; 4 in top 5)

This benefit is closely akin to the first one ("Creates a link between family and school"), but significantly different to the advisory groups who listed both benefits. Because of the environment set by the Expanded ECFE programs, advisory group members said that parents were more likely to come to school, that there was increased involvement of parents at school, and/or that administrators and parents saw each other in a different light.

Benefits to children
(5 listed; 4 in top 5)

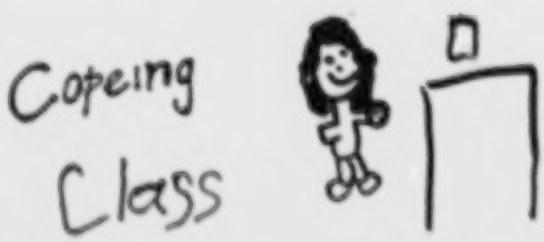
Increased school performance and self-esteem were two benefits to children mentioned. Increased communication with parents and seeing their parents take an interest in school were also cited. "Fun" was also listed as a benefit for children, which is noteworthy since "fun" is a major benefit listed by children and their parents. Fun may be one of the reasons parents and children get involved, and stay involved, with Expanded ECFE programs.

Empowerment of parents/families
(3 listed; 3 in top 5)

In some communities, parents have became advocates at a local and legislative level. One group saw families taking charge of their own problems. Advisory group members found that asking parents to contribute to Expanded ECFE programs and to help with the planning or implementation of programs empowered parents to take action in other ways.

Support system for teachers
(2 listed; 2 in top 5)

One program made arrangements for programs in which classroom teachers took part. Inservices and networking provided by the projects were also listed as support mechanisms for teachers.



Benefits Identified By Parents

Parents in each community were also asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program for themselves, their children, and/or their community.

"Cooperation is a by-word of this program. I feel proud that I was asked to be a member of the advisory board." Proctor/ Hermantown teacher

It is interesting to note that, independently, both the advisory groups and the parents listed many of the same benefits. However, the order of these benefits is nearly reversed. The advisory groups ranked "link between families and school" and "parental education" as the top two benefits. Although parents listed both of these as benefits, they placed them much lower on their list. Parents listed "parental support for each other" and "specific benefits for children" as their top benefits, while these were ranked lower by the advisory groups.

The following were their most common responses. Also indicated is the number of parent groups who listed this benefit, and the number who placed it in the top five benefits.

Parental support

(9 listed; 9 in top 5)

"Parental support for each other" clearly emerged as the major benefit to parents. Parents talked about this benefit in different ways: "A chance to be with other adults and exchange ideas", "Sharing parenting techniques and networking", "parents don't feel so alone", "Get new ideas and opinions from other parents." Some parent groups also mentioned that this was a wonderful opportunity for new parents to get to know other people in the community.

Specific benefits to children

(8 listed; 6 in top 5)

The specific benefits varied: better communication, making friends, feeling special, enhanced learning in school, social skills, and an opportunity to work together as a team were a few of the benefits they listed. Seeing parents involved and interested in school was also viewed as a benefit for children.

Gives parents quality (and quantity) time with child

(7 listed; 6 in top 5)

Both the advisory groups and the parent groups ranked "quality time (one-to-one) with children" as the third benefit. "We get to know our children better through these programs", stated one parent.

Program was accommodating

(8 listed; 5 in top 5)

Many parents we interviewed individually and through focus groups said that the program's accommodations made it possible for them to participate. Specifically mentioned were: financial aid, reasonable cost, childcare, availability of library and community resources, and the willingness of staff members to get additional help for parents.

Parental education

(8 listed; 4 in top 5)

Specifically cited as examples of parent education were: parenting methods (including positive discipline, and role modeling), developmental stages of children, child CPR, and family values.

Fun

(5 listed; 4 in top 5)

Both parents and children cited "fun" as a benefit. Some of their responses were: "This program gave us a chance to enjoy our children, away from the usual routine." "Special events were fun for both parents and children." "This was a positive environment, a change of scenery."

Connection with teachers and school

(2 listed; 2 in top 5)

Two parent groups listed "connection with teachers and school" as one of the benefits, and both ranked it in their top five.

Personal Benefits to Parents

(2 listed; 2 in top 5)

Some of the specific benefits cited were: improved English, going back to school and/or getting GED, integration into American culture, and the ability to break the mold or cycle regarding parenting and family history.

The previous list of benefits was generated through parent focus groups. The information on Table 2 was gathered through 241 parent questionnaires. Table 2 shows the percentage of parents who strongly agreed or agreed that the program provided one of the benefits listed on their questionnaire. Over two-thirds of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that their program provided each of these benefits.

Table 2: Benefits For Parents

"This program helped me to..."	
feel more competent in my role as a parent	84%
have a better understanding of child(ren)'s behavior	82%
communicate better with my children	83%
feel more welcome at school	81%
communicate better with child(ren)'s teacher	68%
find support from other parents	81%
become more familiar with community resources	80%
support my child(ren)'s involvement in school	86%
share parenting tips with family and friends	77%

"The staff had a big influence on my daughter. She just loved coming every week. It was nice to find out that her behavior wasn't that much different than other kids." — Proctor/ Hermantown parent

Benefits Identified By Children

In seven of the ten programs, we had the opportunity to talk to children about what they liked about the program. Since this age group (kindergarten through third graders) is not particularly reflective, we asked them to draw pictures to show what the classes were like. While they were drawing and after they were done, we asked them to explain what they had drawn and what the pictures meant to them. Here are a few ideas gleaned from talking with children. We did not ask them to prioritize the benefits.

Special time with parents

Children relished the one-to-one time they had with their parents. It appeared that children who had siblings particularly appreciated the special time they had with mom and/or dad, but all children who had the opportunity to participate with their parent(s) liked the fact that this time was uninterrupted.

"The speakers and the discussions they have generated among community members is already making changes in the school system and families. The potential of these programs is unlimited." —Waseca parent

Activities: crafts, games, playing outside

Children frequently drew pictures of the things they did in Expanded ECFE classes, and talked about enjoying the activities. Several said that they enjoyed coming back to school at night, but doing things that were different from their daily activities.

Fun

Nearly every student we interviewed said that the classes were fun, and that's why they liked them.

Learned things (reading, math, alcohol and drugs)

Some students talked about learning things in classes, and that learning was fun. In one program, children talked about getting help with homework, and that "they came home happy" as a result of their special classes. When specific topics were emphasized in a program. (i.e. reading, math, science, and alcohol/drugs) the children reflected that emphasis in their comments and pictures. The methods used to teach these subjects were apparently enjoyable to the students. Several also mentioned that they liked teaching things to their parents (i.e. computers).

Take things home; no homework

Many programs provided "goody bags" of things children and parents could do together after the program, or the children were allowed to take their projects home with them.

Teacher

Children gave the names of their teachers; in many cases it was apparent that they had established a special relationship with their Expanded ECFE teachers and/or they developed a slightly different relationship with their classroom teacher if he/she was involved in an Expanded ECFE class.

Snacks/Food

Pizza! was a favorite for children, and snack time seemed to be a highlight. Having snacks and/or meals together with their parents was apparently part of the "fun" that children mentioned.

Friends

Several children mentioned that they made new friends in their classes and they liked coming to the classes because they got to see their friends.

Got to talk about feelings

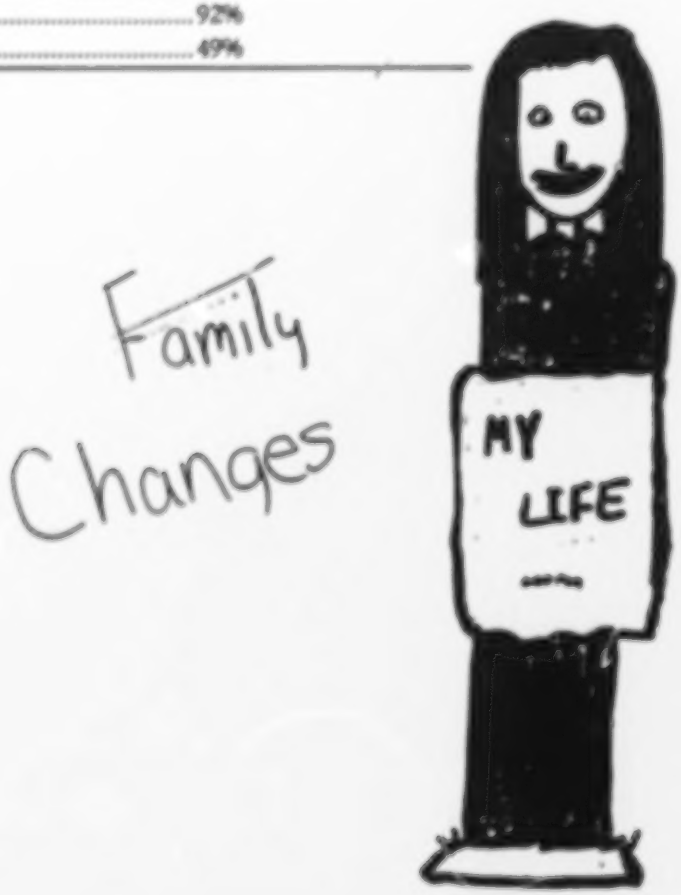
Just getting to talk with other children and with their parents seemed to be very significant for some children. In programs that offered support groups for children, they mentioned that this was a safe place to talk about their feelings, and to find out that they were not alone.

"My children wanted to come even more than we did. I learned new ways of handling my children's attitudes and negative behaviors."
— Robbinsdale parent

Table 3 shows the percentage of parents who strongly agreed or agreed that their school's Expanded ECFE program provided one of the benefits listed on their questionnaire. Of the items listed, "learning about alcohol and other drugs" had the lowest percentage of parental responses.

Table 3: Benefits For Children

"This program helped my child..."	
communicate better with me	86%
handle his/her schoolwork better	69%
make and keep friends better	77%
be more interested in learning	87%
feel better about him/herself	92%
learn about alcohol and other drugs	49%



Unexpected Benefits Identified By School Staff

ECFE and other school staff members were asked to comment about any *unexpected* benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

Increased parental involvement

Even though "increased parental involvement" was a goal of many programs, ECFE and other school staff members frequently expressed surprise at how willing parents were to get involved. Examples were given of parents who got involved in teen pregnancy prevention programs, who became advocates for ECFE programs, who organized their own support groups, who began to attend Parent/Teacher Organization meetings, and who volunteered in their child's classroom.

Success in reaching "high risk" or "hard-to-reach" families

There seemed to be some disbelief at how well some programs were able to recruit and maintain their relationship with "high risk" families. Administrators in particular, were quick to talk about parents they had seen for the first time in three years, and how pleased they were to see dads attending sessions.

Different relationship between parents and school staff

Administrators and classroom teachers both spoke of a difference they found in their relationship to some parents. When administrators and teachers became involved with parents through Expanded ECFE programs, they felt that parents saw them in a different light. They felt that it broke down some of the barriers and that it became easier to contact parents later. Some administrators also said that the Expanded ECFE program also reduced their administrative time; parents contacted Expanded ECFE staff members to ask routine school-related questions.

"Family math was an excellent program. I'd like to see more of that — family science, family all kinds of things. It gets me out to do things with my kids. I love it. Otherwise we stay home and watch TV. But if I commit myself to something, I'll do that instead."
— Forest Lake parent.

More awareness of ECFE

Some ECFE staff members stated that both teachers and administrators in their communities were more aware of the 0-5 ECFE program. They felt that the Expanded ECFE program's presence in the school building increased everyone's understanding of early childhood family education's role.

Section 4: Barriers

Introduction

Most information about programmatic barriers comes from the advisory groups for each of the ten Expanded ECFE programs and from groups of parents who shared their ideas for making programs better.

Barriers Identified by Advisory Groups

Advisory group members were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing the program in their communities. The following were the most common barriers they listed. Also listed is the number of advisory groups who listed this benefit, and the number who placed it in their top five.

Logistical concerns

(8 listed; 7 in top 5)

Scheduling was difficult for programs because of busy, "working" families, because of other events in the community (particularly sporting events), and because of unpredictable Minnesota weather. Problems with time affected programs in two ways: Advisory groups felt that they did not find out about their grant award soon enough, which did not allow staff members enough time to get the program up and running and to fit it into the school calendar. The advisory groups also reflected their staff's frustration with the lack of time to cover topics and by the lack of time to plan and promote each session.

Recruitment

(7 listed; 7 in top 5)

Although general recruitment was a problem in itself, recruiting "high risk" or "targeted" families was even more difficult for programs. Three specific recruitment problems mentioned were the referral system between Expanded ECFE program and the school, teachers' fear of labeling families by referring to the Expanded ECFE program, and difficulty in recruiting from particular parts of a community (i.e., extremely rural areas).

Family attitudes/behaviors

(6 listed; 6 in top 5)

Advisory groups discussed family attitudes and behaviors as one of the significant factors in their difficulty in recruiting participants. Some groups felt that the general decline in parental participation from kindergarten through third grade affected participation in their programs. Others mentioned parental fear of the school itself; parents who feel threatened by the program and are afraid of attending a class; lack of awareness about the need for taking part in the program; lack of parental commitment and/or poor parent follow-through; and lack of support from other family members.

"Being a father myself, I am especially sensitive to the relationship of father to son or daughter. Many of the classes involved fathers at a level that was comfortable." — Waseca school staff member and parent

Communication about the program

(6 listed; 4 in top 5)

Communication about the program also led to problems in recruiting participants. Several programs had multiple school buildings and/or school districts involved, which made it difficult to communicate a new program and new concepts to parents, teachers, and administrators. Most groups said that just because this was a new program, knowledge of the program would take time to develop. One group also discussed both continuity and consistency of communication as a barrier they faced.

Staffing

(4 listed; 4 in top 5)

Finding available and qualified staff members was mentioned as a barrier by four advisory groups, who placed staffing issues in the top five barriers they faced. Lack of experience and understanding about "high risk" families was also mentioned as a staffing concern.

Lack of Resources

(5 listed; 3 in top 5)

"Parents are coming to school who have never been here in three years." — Moorhead administrator

One underlying concern about resources was lack of continuation funds for these programs. Staff members felt that lack of continuation funds created several other problems: credibility with teachers and administrators was difficult to establish, planning and scheduling for next year's program could not take place; and time was diverted into fund-raising for next year's program. Other resource barriers mentioned were inadequate facilities (many programs had to share physical space with classroom teachers or ECFE (0-4) programs that were already cramped) and lack of a resource library for preparing Expanded ECFE sessions.

Parent needs

(3 listed; 3 in top 5)

Childcare, money, and transportation were frequently cited as problems for participants and program staff. However, many of these needs were able to be met because of the grant funding. Only three programs listed these needs as a barrier (although all ranked it in their top five) perhaps because these barriers were overcome in many instances.

Cultural or language issues

(3 listed; 2 in top 5)

Three programs had a minority population as a targeted population, and all three mentioned cultural or language issues as a barrier they faced (only two placed it in their top five, however). Cultural or language issues particularly made it difficult to recruit participants.

Parental Suggestions

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other Expanded ECFE program facilitators." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. Below are the more frequent topics mentioned. They are not prioritized.

Program format

The parents we interviewed were, on the most part, strong advocates of Expanded ECFE programs. Many parents simply wanted more: more than eight sessions, longer sessions, more grades involved (continue past grade 3). The majority had attended ECFE programs before their children entered school, and they wanted the parent/child interaction model continued. However, some also asked for other formats: options for parents to come without children, more ways to involve mom and dad together, and special groups for single parents. More time for discussion was also mentioned as a need. One parent suggested that the activities for children be as unisex as possible to attract and interest both boys and girls.

"One of the things I really enjoyed was the trips we took together to different places." — Moorhead parent

Communication

Some parents expressed frustration with communication about the program. For some, reminders were important and needed to be "timely", others were concerned about consistency and reliability of information.

Involving parents

As a gentle reminder to program staff members, parents said, "don't be afraid to ask us for help." They suggested that parents can provide letters of recommendation for programs, call legislators to advocate for funding, and help in planning and conducting programs. They specifically asked staff members to remember to get feedback from parents about selecting topics, speakers, and activities.

Recruitment

Parents had specific suggestions about recruitment. Several mentioned that varying the times that programs are offered will attract different groups. Hiring same-culture parents to recruit other parents was seen as a way of overcoming culture and language difficulties. Parents also suggested that more fathers could be recruited by offering special programs, being sensitive to scheduling, and by having male staff members.

Other

Parents stressed the need for maintaining confidentiality. Parents also wanted school staff members more involved. They also said that providing childcare, meals, transportation, and financial assistance were very important in attracting and maintaining parental involvement in Expanded ECFE programs.

Section 5: Program Implementation

Introduction

This section describes some of the programmatic details involved in implementing Expanded ECFE programs, including the structure, membership and function of advisory groups; recruiting participants; creating a connection with elementary school programs; and maintaining communication with elementary teachers and administrators. It also compares the Expanded ECFE program to 0-5 ECFE programs in terms of philosophy, format, participants and staffing.

Advisory Groups

Structure

Eight of the ten programs formed special advisory groups. Two used their existing 0-5 ECFE advisory group, but added members to focus on the expanded program.

Membership

"The social worker really works hard to help us with recruitment." — Robbinsdale ECFE staff member

The number of members ranged from six to twenty-six. Some groups met monthly; most met quarterly; and two met twice during the grant period. The representatives were diverse, and may have included: ECFE staff members, school administrators and teachers, parents, school specialists (such as counselors, psychologists, social workers, chemical awareness coordinators, English as a Second Language instructors, librarians, and Chapter 1 staff members) local agency representatives (including social service and public health professionals) and the business community. Only one program included youth as a part of an advisory group.

Function

Regardless of the structure used, the number of members involved, or the representatives chosen for the advisory group, the functions were similar: to identify topics, help plan activities, spread the word about the program to their own agencies, groups, or communities, and evaluate (verbally) the program.

Recruitment

Most programs followed the philosophy of "universal access", which is commonly promoted throughout Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education programs. This concept means that all children and families within a given age bracket are welcome and encouraged to attend any ECFE program. However, the legislation enabling the Expanded ECFE program encouraged an emphasis on "high risk" families. Therefore, all of the programs made special efforts to reach more targeted populations within their communities. This section gives a description of the recruitment strategies used to reach the "universal access" groups and the "targeted" groups.

Universal access strategies

Print and audio/visual methods

Creative use was made of both print and audio-visual methods. The most common methods used were flyers, brochures, newsletters, letters mailed to individual homes, posters, newspaper articles and ads. Many programs made sure to include information in community education catalogues and teacher calendars. Some were able to use TV and radio announcements to promote programs. One program pur-

chased refrigerator magnets with the program logo and telephone number (which they felt was well worth the investment). Another created special bulletin boards in each of their schools.

Children's promotion

The programs which asked children to "market" the program found this strategy to be one of the most effective they used. We found four examples of children's promotion: 1) children were required to bring an adult in order to attend a session, 2) students made announcements over their own school's loudspeaker, 3) children were assigned tasks for sessions and since parents had to bring their own children they often stayed themselves and 4) competitions were held between classrooms; popcorn and juice parties were given as an award for the classroom that had the best parental participation.

Supportive teachers

Strong teacher participation was also given as a very effective method for reaching parents. Teachers held promotional activities in their own classroom, promoted the program at parent-teacher conferences and open-houses, and made personal phone calls to parents.

Staffing patterns

Two staffing patterns were found to be particularly helpful in reaching parents: 1) having a program coordinator in each building, even if the person was part-time 2) having classroom teachers employed as ECFE teachers.

Personal phone calls

Most programs made personal phone calls to reach specific parents, but one program also used it very successfully as a "universal access" strategy by calling all kindergarten parents and all new families who moved into the area.

Format

Many staff members mentioned that the formats used for Expanded ECFE programs were recruitment strategies by themselves. They felt that by hosting special events, providing a wide range of topics and activities, emphasizing fun, varying the times that events were held, offering food, and using a non-threatening approach, programs were attractive to people.

"Provided a nice book on drugs and alcohol to use with our children now and at each age level as they grow. Thought this was nice and helpful."
— Robbinsdale parent

The previous list of recruitment strategies was gathered through interviews with ECFE staff. Table 4 shows the percentage of parents who heard about the program by various means. The information on Table 4 was gathered through 241 questionnaires completed by parents. Even though staff members were not sure that written materials were effective in recruiting parents, 61% of the parents said they heard about the program through brochures or flyers, and 30% said they heard about the program through a newsletter. This table also substantiates the efforts classroom teachers made to promote the ECFE program or to refer parents to the program.

"This program had a big influence on my daughter. She loved coming. Nice to find out her behavior wasn't that different from other kids." — Proctor/ Hermantown parent

Table 4: Recruitment Strategies: Parents' View

"I heard about the program from..."

A brochure or flyer	61%
A newsletter	30%
My child's teacher	25%
Another parent	18%
The newspaper	13%
Telephone call from ECFE staff	11%
Poster	5%
Social service staff	4%
Television or radio	>1%
Other	13%

"Targeted" families strategies

Targeting "high risk" schools

By selecting schools within their district that had a higher percentage of "high risk" families, some programs felt they had a better rate of participation. This approach avoided labeling individual families as "high risk."

Creating referral networks with schools and agencies

By far the most frequently used strategy for recruiting "high risk" families was to work with schools and agencies to identify and refer those families to the Expanded ECFE program. Within schools, connections were made with teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, student assistance teams, Chapter 1 and "Assurance of Mastery" staff members. A list of families who might be able to use Expanded ECFE services was created in some programs and then used for special recruitment efforts throughout the year. Staff members from schools and social services were also encouraged to refer individual families to programs.

Personal phone calls and home visits

Once families had been identified, clearly the most effective method for reaching them were personal (often multiple) phone calls and home visits. Staff members reported that because of a number of factors, "high risk" families were not as receptive to written materials. Both classroom teachers and Expanded ECFE staff members were used to make phone calls and home visits. Both reported that these personal contacts, although time consuming, were the best way to reach out to families.

Parent-to-parent communication

This strategy may be the most difficult to measure, but many staff members felt that word-of-mouth was or would eventually be the most effective method of reaching "high risk" families. Staff members cited specific examples of "high risk" families that came to the program because another parent told them about it and encouraged them to attend.

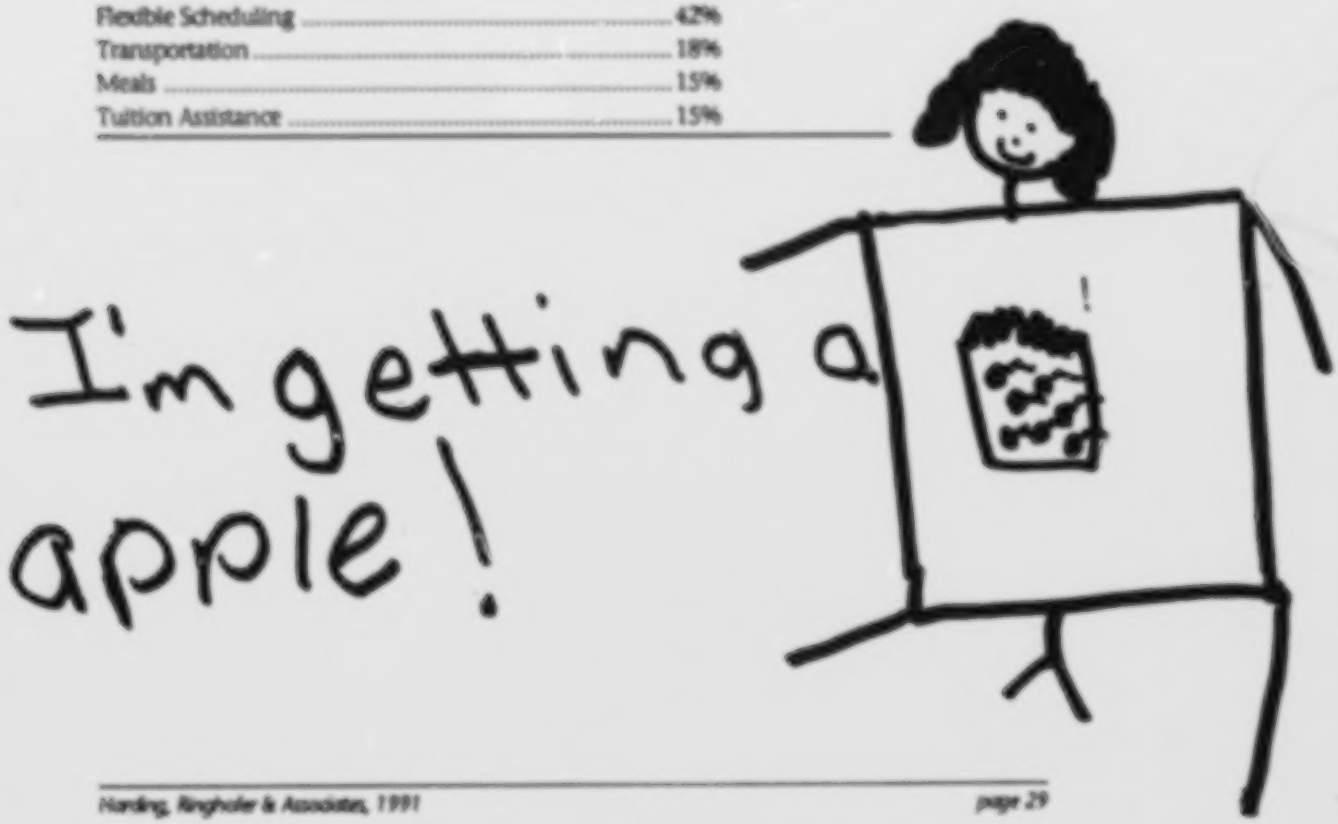
Barrier-free approach

For all families — and particularly for high risk families — situational factors can get in the way of participating in Expanded ECFE programs. All programs attempted to remove many barriers (such as childcare, transportation, tuition, meals, scheduling, and location) in order to make it possible for families to participate. Offering special services, such as interpreters and translated print materials helped to remove language as a barrier to participation for some families. From the survey results, it is apparent that providing a convenient location, childcare, and flexible scheduling are among the most important services provided.

Table 5 shows the percentage of parents who found that specific program services helped them participate in the program. This information was gathered through parent questionnaires.

Table 5: Removing Barriers to Participation

"I was helped by..."	
Convenient Location	79%
Childcare	43%
Flexible Scheduling	42%
Transportation	18%
Meals	15%
Tuition Assistance	15%



Connection to Elementary School Programs

The following are some ways Expanded ECFE programs are connected to their community's elementary school:

- Some programs specifically design their programs to enhance the regular curriculum. Some examples are: after-school homework help, shared curriculum (i.e. "QUEST"), joint timing of topics, and supplemental family curriculum such as "Family Math", "Parents as Partners in Reading", "Science Night", "Computers", etc.

- Some administrators suggested that Expanded ECFE programs may eventually be used to assist with Individual Education Plans and/or Outcome-Based Education

- Most programs share classroom space, and use AV equipment and materials from the elementary program

- Some also share school personnel, employing paraprofessionals or classroom teachers as Expanded ECFE home/school liaisons or as Expanded ECFE program teachers

- Expanded ECFE program staff members may work with school staff members to identify "high risk" families

- Expanded ECFE program staff members may encourage parents to volunteer and coordinate volunteer programs in order to enhance the elementary school's programs

- Teachers often attend special events, and may participate in programs with their own children

- Teachers also help with field trip organization

Communication with Elementary School Staff Members

Many different methods were used throughout the programs to maintain communication with elementary school staff members. These included written materials, such as flyers and memos, but were more often person-to-person contact. Some methods used were:

- Needs assessment surveys used in the beginning to create awareness and promote involvement (in addition to getting ideas about the program)

- Presentations at staff and faculty meetings

- Joint inservices sponsored and/or attended by Expanded ECFE program staff members

- Participation of school staff members on Expanded ECFE program advisory groups

- Expanded ECFE program staff members "drop into" classrooms
- "Koffee Klatches" were hosted by Expanded ECFE program staff members in the teacher's classroom to help parents and teachers become better acquainted

Methods for communication and collaboration listed above were gathered through interviews with ECFE staff members and other professionals. Table 6 shows the percentage of ECFE staff members and other professionals who said their program used one of the following methods to communicate and collaborate.

It was prepared using data from the 58 ECFE staff member questionnaires and the 140 "Other Professionals" questionnaires. ECFE staff members consistently rated all of the strategies higher than other professionals, perhaps reflecting their greater level of familiarity with strategies used.

Table 6: Communication and Collaboration

Method	ECFE Staff	Other Prof.
Teachers also employed as ECFE (K-3) parent educators	48%	32%
Curriculum is shared	60%	46%
Teachers can refer directly to ECFE (K-3) programs	97%	63%
Teachers/ECFE (K-3) staff share specific information	84%	51%
Joint in-service opportunities for ECFE(K-3)/teachers	81%	36%
ECFE (K-3) program use regular classroom space	84%	63%
ECFE (K-3)/teachers communicate about events	78%	53%
Classroom teachers promote ECFE classes	78%	55%

Comparison to 0-5 ECFE Programs

Philosophy

Staff members apparently share the same philosophy about working with parents as do their pre-school counterparts. Concentrating on family strengths, not deficits; empowering families to solve their own problems; involving parents in education; networking with other agencies are all cornerstones of the ECFE pre-school programs, and we found these same philosophies throughout all ten programs.

Format

Nine out of the ten programs used the same parent/child interaction format as do the pre-school programs. This format encourages parents and children to work together on activities for at least part of the session, after which they may meet separately. Some programs used more "speaker nights" and most focussed on different topics and activities to meet the developmental needs of this somewhat older population of children.

"To its credit, K-3 has actively involved parents in the program planning and implementation stages." — Forest Lake school administrator

Participants

In many programs staff members were somewhat surprised at the number of brand-new families who participated in the ECFE(K-3) program. Of the 241 parents we surveyed, 63% of the parents had participated in ECFE prior to their child's entry into school, but 36% had not. In general, staff members felt they were much more tightly connected to the elementary school than in pre-school ECFE and that outreach to "high risk" families was much easier to do because of the school's involvement. Some programs reported a higher percentage of fathers' participation in the K-3 programs.

Staffing

Some Expanded ECFE program staff members are either currently employed by pre-school ECFE programs or have worked in pre-school programs in the past. Staffing may have been slightly different in some programs since this program did not require licensed family educators. Therefore, elementary teachers could be and, in some cases, were Expanded ECFE program teachers.

drawing

Section 6: Expanded ECFE Programs as a Vehicle for Prevention

Introduction

As a part of the legislation that established Early Childhood Family Education Expanded K-3 Programs, the Commissioner of Education was directed to "evaluate the effectiveness of the expanded early childhood and family education program as a component of the drug prevention initiative."

The research we have reviewed as a part of this project overwhelmingly supports the involvement of parents in any effort aimed at preventing problems which place children — and learners — at risk. Parental involvement is seen as essential in improving children's opportunities for success in school, as well as in reducing the chance that children will experience problems with alcohol and other drugs.

Potential for Prevention

Early Childhood Family Education programs in general, and Expanded ECFE programs in particular appear to have extraordinary potential as a prevention strategy for at least seven reasons:

- They involve parents before children are using alcohol and other drugs and before they have experienced repeated school failure.
- They use the concept of "universal access" which does not label or place any stigma on parents who participate. This may overcome some of the natural reluctance of parents to get involved in specific alcohol and other drug prevention programs.
- They concentrate on the strengths of families rather than the deficits, which aids in both recruiting families and in retaining families once they have become involved.
- They can build a team between the school and family, which can increase the likelihood that children will hear the same positive messages from several important people in their lives.
- They can make a bridge between the family and social services which can get help to families who are already experiencing problems.
- They can provide information and skill training so that parents can be more equipped to guide their children.
- Perhaps most importantly, they can provide an opportunity for parents to find support from other parents. This opportunity can be a springboard for other parental involvement programs, including those which organize parents for prevention of alcohol and other drug problems.

Prevention Strategies Used

There are several benefits to children and families who have participated in Expanded ECFE programs. Many of these benefits may generally strengthen families and thus help prevent alcohol and other drug problems. However, this section will address the alcohol and drug-specific methods used in the ten pilot sites. We found seven strategies used:

Parent Training

Through special events (usually "speaker nights") and ongoing parent and child classes, parents were given information about alcohol and other drugs and their role in preventing problems. Two specific programs used were the QUEST curriculum and Johnson Institute's "Parenting for Prevention".

Support Groups

Special support groups were offered for children and families who were experiencing problems which may have been related to alcohol and other drugs.

Staffing

The district's chemical health specialist or social service agencies provided staff members who are specialists in preventing alcohol and other drug problems.

High School Student Leaders

High school student leaders to worked with ECFE staff members to present information to children and parents about the importance of being chemically free.

Joint Representation on Advisory Groups

In order to coordinate programs more effectively, programs placed ECFE staff members on their district's chemical health advisory committee or placed the district's chemical health specialist on the ECFE advisory committee.

Referral to Social Service Agencies

Families were referred to social service agencies who could provide counseling about alcohol and other drug problems.

Resource Materials

Resource materials on alcohol and other drugs and prevention were made available to families as a part of ECFE classes, through "take-home kits" or through a parent resource center.

Perception About Prevention Strategies Used

Through interviews with staff members and parents, it became clear that most programs are relying on general positive parenting strategies as a method of preventing alcohol and other drug problems. We believe that the potential for ECFE programs to prevent alcohol and other drug problems can be strengthened in future years, and is one area of growth for most programs we visited.

When we examined the data we had collected through surveys, we found an interesting trend related to prevention of alcohol and other drug problems. ECFE staff members, other professionals, and parents were each asked to select the strategies used to prevent alcohol and other drug problems through their Expanded ECFE programs. We found agreement between all three groups: of the strategies listed, the ones receiving the highest percentage of responses were:

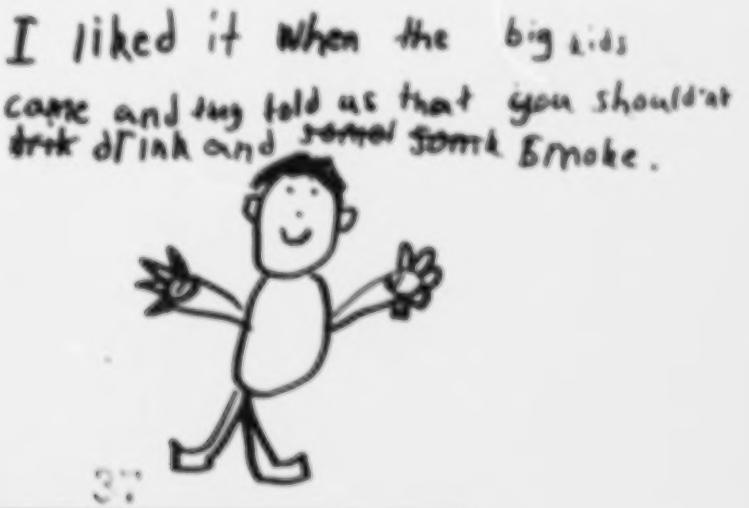
- Set limits and boundaries for children's behavior
- Be a good role model about alcohol and other drugs

"ECFE stepped in and really facilitated our parent organization. They allowed it to be effective." — St. Paul counselor

Even though there was agreement about the rating of the first two strategies, there was a consistent trend in how many people perceived that a strategy was used. The percentage of ECFE staff members who perceived that a strategy was used was consistently higher than other professionals. The percentage of other professionals who perceived that a strategy was used was also consistently higher than parents.

Table 7: Perception About Prevention Strategies

Strategy	ECFE Staff	Other Prof.	Parents
Provide alcohol/other drug information.	55%	41%	27%
Set limits/boundaries for children's behavior.	84%	59%	47%
Be a good role model	76%	48%	33%
Talk to children about alcohol and other drugs.	53%	39%	29%
Send a strong "no-use" message	53%	43%	29%
Don't know what strategies are used	12%	36%	—



Section 7: Participant Satisfaction

Introduction

As part of their written surveys, parents, ECFE staff members, and other professionals were asked to respond to a list of statements about the Expanded ECFE programs. These statements were adapted from a list of characteristics of successful 0-5 ECFE programs which have been used by program staff members throughout Minnesota as a self-evaluation instrument. (Engstrom, et al, 1986)

Table 8 shows the percentage of ECFE staff members and other professionals who strongly agree or agree with the program criteria given. The percentages have not been adjusted for the number of people who responded "NA" to indicate that they did not know or that the statement was not appropriate for their program. The number of "NA" responses ranged from 0-25% and, in all cases, was higher for "Other Professionals".

Table 8: Program Criteria - ECFE Staff and Other Professionals

Program Criteria	ECFE Staff	Other Prof.
Most parents of K-3 children know about program	76%	69%
Special recruitment efforts made to high risk families	91%	88%
The program meets the specific needs of our area	94%	90%
K-3 Parents are actively involved in planning	69%	55%
The program has the support of K-3 teachers	86%	84%
The program has administrative support	91%	86%
Coordinated with other community services/agencies	79%	80%
Opportunities for learning about child development and parenting by discussing personal examples	95%	89%
Parents/children select activities to participate in	98%	92%
Materials/activities reflect parental/home importance	99%	90%
Adequate and appropriate facilities for the program	86%	80%

crafts

A slightly different set of criteria were given to parents to rate on a questionnaire. Table 9 shows the percentage of parents who strongly agree or agree with the program criteria given.

Table 9: Program Criteria - Parents

"As a parent I felt..."	
I had choices about the program activities	71%
I had choices about the topics we talked about	71%
There was enough time during classes for my concerns to be discussed	75%
I got enough information about my child(ren)'s ECFE class	82%
The fees charged for programs (if any) were reasonable	78%
The take-home materials were helpful	83%
The meeting rooms are attractive and inviting to me	85%
The meeting rooms are interesting and stimulating to my child(ren)	85%

Table 10 shows the percentage of ECFE staff members and other professionals who strongly agree or agree with the criteria given for staff members. The percentages on this table have not been adjusted for the number of people who responded "NA" to indicate that they did not know or that the statement was not appropriate for their program. The number of "NA" responses ranged from 0-27% and, in all cases, was higher for "Other Professionals".

"The parents from this school prove that all parents care about helping their kids." — St. Paul ECFE staff member

Table 10: Staff Criteria - ECFE Staff and Other Professionals

Staff Criteria	ECFE Staff	Other Prof.
Staff members are:		
appropriately licensed and/or certified	97%	92%
knowledgeable about family education	98%	96%
skilled presenters	96%	90%
skilled group process facilitators	93%	89%
knowledgeable about alcohol/other drug prevention	94%	71%
good team players	99%	96%

Table 11 shows the percentage of parents who strongly agree or agree with the criteria given for program staff. Eighty five percent or more of all parents surveyed strongly agreed or agreed with all of the staff criteria.

Table 11: Staff Criteria - Parents

"The ECFE (K-3) program staff are..."	
knowledgeable	95%
friendly and supportive	99%
organized	95%
good group facilitators	97%
easy to contact for information	85%

Section 8: Recommendations

Introduction

The following recommendations for the Minnesota Department of Education are based on a review of the literature on parental involvement and prevention, on our observations of the ten pilot sites, on the interviews and focus groups we conducted with 272 adults and 80 children, and on the surveys we collected from 439 ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents who were involved in the Expanded ECFE programs.

Recommendation #1:
Continue funding Expanded ECFE programs

We are pleased to report that the needs of many parents and children in the ten pilot sites have been well served through these projects. The level of effort actually expended in most of these projects has exceeded the original proposals, and it is apparent that the projects did what they said they were going to do. Through our research and the site review process we have come to believe that Expanded ECFE programs are an effective way to increase parental involvement in education, to reach "high risk" families, and to encourage parents to become involved in the primary prevention of alcohol and other drug use problems. It appears that the expenditure of funds is well worth the investment.

Award two-year grants

If further grant programs are initiated, funds should be granted for at least two years, based on satisfactory performance at the close of the first year. As a part of the second year renewal, communities should be required to show at least partial local funding.

Seek permanent funding

Funding should eventually be based on more permanent funding, such as per capita aid (or the same structure in place at the time to fund 0-5 FCFE programs).

Recommendation #2:
Maintain sponsorship of Expanded ECFE programs through MDE's Early Childhood Family Education Program.

The structure for monitoring ECFE programs, for promoting professional standards, for staff training, for creating and disseminating parenting materials, and for evaluation is already in place in this division. In addition, we found extensive support and appreciation for the MDE staff members at a local level.

We also found internal consistency in philosophy from program to program. Even though the ten programs worked with slightly different target audiences, used diverse methods and operated in quite different settings, the philosophy about family education was nearly identical. Program staff members demonstrated a deep sense of respect for the strengths of families and for the ability of parents to care for their children. This uniform, positive philosophy has been built over more than fifteen years of Early Childhood Family Education in Minnesota. With nearly all of the schools in Minnesota providing well-accepted 0-5 ECFE programs it is logical to use 0-5 ECFE programs as a base for elementary school programs.

Recommendation #3:
Promote the concept of "universal access" for Expanded ECFE Programs while extending special efforts to recruit "high risk" or "hard-to-reach" families.

This concept may well be the key to involving parents at a local level. "Universal access" decreases the chance that parents will feel labeled by participating in family education programs, and increases the likelihood that administrators, teachers, and other school staff members will feel comfortable in referring families and promoting Expanded ECFE programs.

Recruit "high risk" families

For a variety of reasons, it is not easy to involve "high risk" families in their child(ren)s' elementary education program. General methods are not usually adequate. Therefore, a significant level of effort must be allocated for extensive phone calling, for home visits, and for reducing barriers (such as childcare, transportation, tuition, and meals) if this population is to be reached.

Recruit other "hard to reach" families

Some populations within a community may also be harder to reach, even though they may not be "high risk". Creative programming should be supported to encourage single parents, fathers, and minority races or cultures to be involved.

Recommendation #4:
Encourage diversity in programming to meet the developmental needs of elementary-age children and their parents.

The parent/child interaction model was still reported to be effective for this population. Parents who had been involved in ECFE before their children were in school were particularly concerned that this approach be maintained. However, other models were also found to be effective.

Encourage experimentation

Parental involvement programs for early elementary age are in their infancy. Programs should be afforded sufficient latitude to experiment with formats, topics, and activities for this age group.

Continue evaluation

Programs should also be encouraged to conduct individual program evaluations to determine program impact. State-wide evaluations should be conducted to learn about these programs and to disseminate information. Consideration should be given to funding more extensive projects to measure long-term outcomes such as reducing school failure and alcohol and other drug problems.

Focus on fun and discussion

In an effort to provide education, "fun" and an opportunity to talk must not be forgotten. Both parents and children reported that one of the reasons they participated was that programs were fun. Parents also reported that the most significant benefit to them was parent-to-parent support.

Recommendation #5:
Link Expanded ECFE programs to prevention efforts for alcohol and other drug use problems and other at-risk areas.

It is clear from the research literature that parents have a primary role to play in prevention. Expanded ECFE programs provide an opportunity to involve parents in prevention when their children are still young.

Integrate with other prevention efforts

Expanded ECFE programs should integrate their programming with chemical health efforts in their schools and communities. We would particularly recommend that ECFE advisory boards and chemical health committees have joint representation; that elementary curriculum regarding chemical health be shared; and that the Expanded ECFE program involve senior high school peer leaders in their programs for parents and children.

Infuse prevention messages

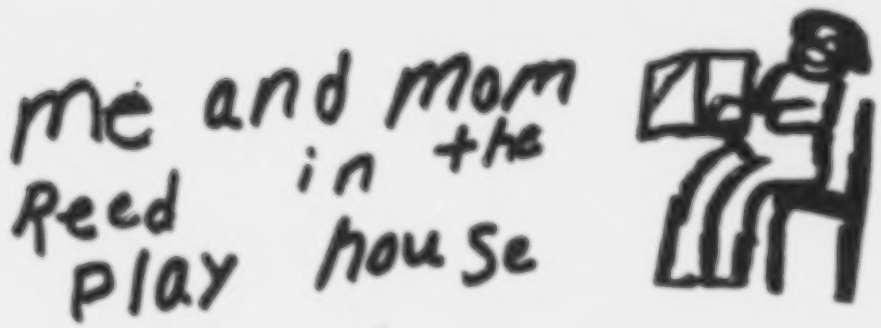
Although special events or programs about alcohol and other drug prevention can be offered, prevention messages should be "infused" into the parenting curriculum. When special alcohol and other drug prevention events are advertised, attendance is often lower than desired.

Be specific about alcohol and other drug prevention skills

Effective parenting skills and increased parental involvement may both be preventative strategies. However, two specific parenting strategies should be used at this age level to provide a foundation for preventing alcohol and other drug use problems:

1) role modeling appropriate decisions about the use and non-use of alcohol and other drugs and
2) sending a strong no-use message for young people.

The research shows that adolescents who perceive that their parents would be concerned about their use tend to use much less than other adolescents. These messages need to begin early and be repeated often throughout childhood and adolescence.



Recommendation #6:
Budget sufficient time to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with other groups in the community

Services for elementary parents and children can be more effectively delivered if deliberate efforts are made to work with other agencies, groups, and individuals who are concerned with this age group. However, communication, coordination, and collaboration are time consuming and may take a back seat to direct service provision.

Connect with the elementary school

One of the strengths of this program is its connection to the elementary school. Extensive and continual efforts need to be made to coordinate programs with administrators, with district specialists, and with classroom teachers. With this connection, activities that support and enhance the school curriculum, and/or promote parental involvement in children's learning can be implemented.

Connect with parent groups

Programs also need to coordinate their efforts with existing or new parent groups, including parent/teacher organizations, parent communication networks and other parent-run groups.

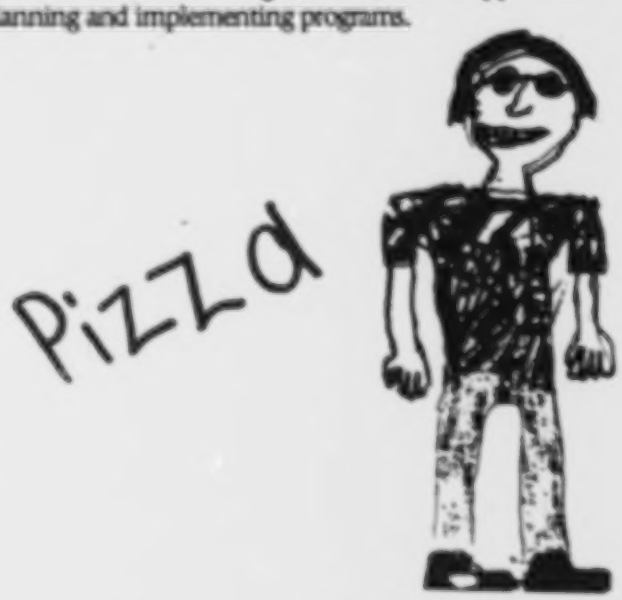
Connect with other service providers

Social service, health care, vocational and employment services, service groups and religious organizations can also assist Expanded ECFE programs in meeting the needs of this group of parents and their children.

Expanded ECFE programs can collaborate with these groups to provide services and to promote available programs and services.

Connect with volunteers

Three other groups can be instrumental in providing resources: parent volunteers, high school-age youth, and retired seniors. Programs should seek opportunities to involve these groups in planning and implementing programs.



Recommendation #7:
Support and enhance the Expanded ECFE programs through continued inservice training opportunities

Provide training in family education for non-licensed staff

When staff members are used in Expanded ECFE programs who are not licensed family educators (such as elementary classroom teachers), special support and/or training should be provided in group facilitation, in parent/ involvement and in working with families.

Provide training on "high risk"

Continued inservice training opportunities should be provided for all staff members involved with Expanded ECFE programs in order to increase their ability to recruit and establish relationships with "high risk" families.

Provide training on prevention

Inservice training and materials should be provided for Expanded ECFE staff members in order to increase their ability to provide sound and developmentally appropriate alcohol and other drug education for parents and children.

Recommendation #8: Seek ways to involve children and parents in planning and delivering Expanded ECFE services

Even though Expanded ECFE programs serve young children, meaningful ways can be, and were, found to involve them in planning, promoting, and delivering services that directly affect them. As the emphasis on youth leadership and service learning continues in Minnesota, we highly recommend that information on effective methods of involving young children be collected and disseminated to Expanded ECFE programs. Parents are also looking for ways to be involved in their children's education, particularly at an elementary age, and Expanded ECFE programs benefit from their assistance.

Fun

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I'm talking!

School and Community Questionnaire
(ECFE Staff Responses)

Introduction

Staff in the ECFE Program were asked to respond to a questionnaire prior to being interviewed about their experiences with the ECFE (K-3) Program. This is a summary of their responses. Fifty-eight ECFE staff members completed this survey. The responses are reported as a percentage of the total.

Name of School:

Categories that apply to you (Check all that apply):

100	ECFE (K-3) Staff
38	ECFE (0-5) Staff
26	Elementary school teacher (Grade:___)
3	School Administrator
9	School counselor, social worker, nurse or other professional staff
28	Advisory committee member
	28 ECFE (K-3)
	10 ECFE
	5 Community Education
14	Parent with child enrolled in ECFE (K-3) program
0	Social service agency professional
12	Other_____

Program Barriers

The following barriers can get in the way of family participation in ECFE (K-3) programs. Which are a problem for people in your community? Which problems does your program attempt to solve? (If you don't know, check "DK")

A problem for people?		Our program offers this service?	
Transportation	53 Yes 33 No 14 DK	Transportation	78 Yes 10 No 12 DK
Childcare	67 Yes 26 No 7 DK	Childcare	79 Yes 16 No 5 DK
Meals	31 Yes 50 No 19 DK	Meals	43 Yes 38 No 19 DK
Fees	50 Yes 43 No 7 DK	Tuition Asst.	67 Yes 17 No 16 DK
Scheduling	67 Yes 28 No 5 DK	Flexible Sched.	64 Yes 22 No 14 DK
Location	40 Yes 47 No 14 DK	Convenient Sites	91 Yes 0 No 9 DK

Program Overview

Please read the statements given below. If you strongly agree with this statement, circle SA. If you agree, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD. If you don't know, or this statement is not appropriate for your program, circle NA.

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
Most parents of children in grades K-3 know about this program	21	55	17	3	3
Special efforts are made to recruit parents and children in high risk family situations	48	43	3	0	5
The program meets the specific needs of our area	34	60	2	0	3
Parents (with children in grades K-3) are actively involved in program planning	17	52	22	2	7
The program has the support of K-3 teachers	26	60	9	2	3
The program has administrative support	36	55	5	2	2
The program is coordinated with other community services and agencies	36	43	7	2	12
Through the program, parents have adequate opportunities to learn about child development and parenting by	62	33	0	0	5
Parents and children have choices in selecting activities in which they will participate	60	38	2	0	0
Materials and activities reflect the importance of the parent and the home environment	71	28	2	0	0
We have adequate and appropriate facilities for the program	48	38	12	2	0

ECFE (K-3) Program Staff

Staff members are...	SA	A	D	SD	NA
appropriately licensed and/or certified	83	14	0	0	3
knowledgeable about family education	88	10	0	0	2
skilled presenters	72	24	0	0	3
skilled group process facilitators	64	29	2	0	5
knowledgeable about alcohol and other drug prevention	47	47	2	0	5
good team players	83	15	0	0	2

Communication: Classroom Teachers and ECFE (K-3) Programs

The following are ways that classroom teachers and ECFE (K-3) staff may communicate and collaborate on programs. Check any that apply to your program:

48 Classroom teachers are also employed as ECFE (K-3) parent educators

60 Curriculum is shared between both programs

97 Classroom teachers can refer families directly to ECFE (K-3) programs

84 Classroom teachers and ECFE (K-3) staff share information about specific children and/or families

81 Joint in-service opportunities are provided for ECFE(K-3) and classroom teachers

84 ECFE (K-3) program use regular classroom space

78 ECFE (K-3) and classroom teachers communicate about events

78 Classroom teachers promote ECFE (K-3) classes

48 Other

Program Strategies

Please rate the strategies used by your program from 1 to 4 in terms of their effectiveness. If you think they are very effective, give them a 4; if you think they are not effective, give them a 1. If your program does not use this strategy, or you do not know, mark NA.

	Very Effective.....Not Effective				
	4	3	2	1	NA
Special Events	53	26	7	0	14
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive)	34	28	10	0	28
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	62	31	2	0	5
Parent Support Groups	33	31	3	2	28
Child Support Groups	19	33	0	0	48
Resource Materials	36	45	9	3	7
Home Visits	19	14	9	2	57
Family Counseling	7	19	2	2	71
Other _____	22	3	0	0	74

Parents and Prevention

A goal of some ECFE (K-3) programs is to help parents prevent alcohol and other drug use problems. Which of the following strategies has your program prepared parents to use with their child(ren)? (Check all that apply)

55 Provide information about alcohol and other drugs

84 Set limits and boundaries for their childrens' behavior

76 Be a good adult role model about their own use or non-use of alcohol and other drugs

53 Talk to their children about alcohol and other drugs

53 Send a strong "no-use" message about alcohol and other drug use by young people

12 I do not know what specific prevention strategies are used

School and Community Questionnaire
(Responses from professionals who are not ECFE Staff)

Introduction
Professionals who are not ECFE staff were asked to respond to a questionnaire. XXX completed the questionnaire prior to being interviewed about their experiences with the ECFE (K-3) Program and XXX completed a questionnaire but were not interviewed. This is a summary of their responses. A total of one hundred and forty professionals completed this survey. The responses are reported as a percentage of the total.

Name of School:
Categories that apply to you (Check all that apply):

0	ECFE (K-3) Staff
6	ECFE (0-5) Staff
16	Elementary school teacher (Grade:___)
19	School Administrator
11	School counselor, social worker, nurse or other professional staff
29	Advisory committee member
	20 ECFE (K-3)
	8 ECFE
	4 Community Education
15	Parent with child enrolled in ECFE (K-3) program
5	Social service agency professional
19	Other_____

Program Barriers
The following barriers can get in the way of family participation in ECFE (K-3) programs. Which are a problem for people in your community? Which problems does your program attempt to solve? (If you don't know, check "DK")

A problem for people?		**Our program offers this service?**	
Transportation	55 Yes 24 No 21 DK	Transportation	53 Yes 18 No 29 DK
Childcare	71 Yes 21 No 8 DK	Childcare	79 Yes 9 No 12 DK
Meals	26 Yes 40 No 34 DK	Meals	29 Yes 33No 38 DK
Fees	47 Yes 34 No 19 DK	Tuition Asst.	46 Yes 12 No 42 DK
Scheduling	57 Yes 20 No 23 DK	Flexible Sched.	60 Yes 11 No 29 DK
Location	26 Yes 53 No 21 DK	Convenient Sites	86 Yes >1 No 14 DK

Program Overview

Please read the statements given below. If you strongly agree with this statement, circle SA. If you agree, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD. If you don't know, or this statement is not appropriate for your program, circle NA.

	SA	A	D	SD	NA
Most parents of children in grades K-3 know about this program	20	49	17	4	10
Special efforts are made to recruit parents and children in high risk family situations	47	41	4	0	9
The program meets the specific needs of our area	31	59	4	0	7
Parents (with children in grades K-3) are actively involved in program planning	14	41	15	4	25
The program has the support of K-3 teachers	31	53	7	0	9
The program has administrative support	37	49	4	0	9
The program is coordinated with other community services and agencies	31	49	2	0	17
Through the program, parents have adequate opportunities to learn about child development and parenting by discussing personal examples	46	43	2	0	9
Parents and children have choices in selecting activities in which they will participate	44	48	>1	0	8
Materials and activities reflect the importance of the parent and the home environment	47	43	1	0	9
We have adequate and appropriate facilities for the program	32	48	8	1	11

ECFE (K-3) Program Staff

Staff members are...	SA	A	D	SD	NA
appropriately licensed and/or certified	61	31	0	0	9
knowledgeable about family education	66	30	0	>1	4
skilled presenters	53	37	>1	>1	9
skilled group process facilitators	51	38	>1	>1	9
knowledgeable about alcohol and other drug prevention	25	46	>1	>1	27
good team players	64	32	>1	0	4

Communication: Classroom Teachers and ECFE (K-3) Programs

The following are ways that classroom teachers and ECFE (K-3) staff may communicate and collaborate on programs. Check any that apply to your program:

32 Classroom teachers are also employed as ECFE (K-3) parent educators

46 Curriculum is shared between both programs

63 Classroom teachers can refer families directly to ECFE (K-3) programs

51 Classroom teachers and ECFE (K-3) staff share information about specific children and/or families

36 Joint in-service opportunities are provided for ECFE(K-3) and classroom teachers

63 ECFE (K-3) program use regular classroom space

53 ECFE (K-3) and classroom teachers communicate about events

55 Classroom teachers promote ECFE (K-3) classes

24 Other

Program Strategies

Please rate the strategies used by your program from 1 to 4 in terms of their effectiveness. If you think they are very effective, give them a 4; if you think they are not effective, give them a 1. If your program does not use this strategy, or you do not know, mark NA.

	Very Effective.....Not Effective				
	4	3	2	1	NA
Special Events	49	29	1	0	21
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive)	32	33	5	1	29
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	46	32	4	>1	17
Parent Support Groups	25	33	0	>1	40
Child Support Groups	16	31	2	>1	49
Resource Materials	26	47	4	0	23
Home Visits	26	17	2	0	55
Family Counseling	14	16	2	0	68
Other _____	6	>1	0	0	94

Parents and Prevention

A goal of some ECFE (K-3) programs is to help parents prevent alcohol and other drug use problems. Which of the following strategies has your program prepared parents to use with their child(ren)? (Check all that apply)

41 Provide information about alcohol and other drugs

59 Set limits and boundaries for their childrens' behavior

48 Be a good adult role model about their own use or non-use of alcohol and other drugs

39 Talk to their children about alcohol and other drugs

43 Send a strong "no-use" message about alcohol and other drug use by young people

36 I do not know what specific prevention strategies are used

Parent Questionnaire

Introduction

Parents who participated in the ECFE Program were asked to respond to a questionnaire. XXX completed the questionaire prior to taking part in a focus group. An additional XXXwere mailed question aires or given questionnaires at a class they attended. This is a summary of their responses. A total of 241 parents completed this survey. The responses are reported as a percentage of the total.

1. Name of Your Child's School _____

2. What type of ECFE (K-3) class did you attend or service did you use? Please check all that apply:

   76 Special event (a one or two-time recreational or educational activity)
   17 On-going class for parents (3 sessions or more)
   52 On-going class for parents and children (3 sessions or more)
   11 Parent support groups
   19 Resource materials (from a Parent Resource Center or other lending library)
   5 Home visits (an ECFE (K-3) staff person came to my home
   2 Family counseling
   4 Other

3. Did you participate in ECFE before your child entered school? **63**Yes **36** No

4. How many children do you have? **XXX** How old are they? **XXX**

5. How did you hear about the program? Check any that apply:

   18 Another parent
   25 My child's teacher
   61 A brochure or flyer
   30 A newsletter
   13 The newspaper
   >1 Television or radio announcement
   5 Poster
   4 Social service staff person told me about it
   11 Telephone call from ECFE (K-3) staff person
   13 Other:_____

Program Overview

Below are some statements about your school's ECFE (K-3) program. If you Strongly Agree with the statement, circle SA. If you Agree with the statement, circle A. If you Disagree with the statement, circle D. If you Strongly Disagree with the statement, circle SD. If the statement does not apply to your program, or you don't know, circle NA.

The ECFE (K-3) program staff are...	SA	A	D	SD	NA
knowledgeable	59	36	>1	0	5
friendly and supportive	75	24	0	>1	>1
organized	54	41	2	>1	3
good group facilitators	57	40	>1	>1	2
easy to contact for information	52	33	2	>1	12
I had choices about the program activities	29	42	5	2	21
I had choices about the topics we talked about	27	44	5	>1	23
There was enough time during classes for my concerns to be discussed	26	49	7	2	16
I got enough information about what was happening in my child(ren)'s ECFE class	35	47	2	>1	15
The fees charged for programs (if any) were reasonable	51	27	>1	0	21
Take-home materials were helpful	41	42	>1	0	16
The meeting rooms are attractive and inviting to me	31	54	2	>1	12
The meeting rooms are interesting and stimulating to my child(ren)	46	39	2	>1	12

Program Barriers

Barriers (such as transportation, childcare, meals, fees, scheduling and location) can can get in the way of family participation in ECFE (K-3) programs. Which services does your program provide that you personally find helpful? *(Check all that apply)*

Transportation	**18%**
Childcare	**43%**
Meals	**15%**
Tuition Assistance	**15%**
Flexible Scheduling	**42%**
Convenient Location	**79%**

Parents and Prevention

A goal of some ECFE (K-3) programs is to help parents prevent alcohol and other drug use problems. Which of the following strategies has the ECFE (K-3) program helped you use with your child or children? *(Check all that apply)*

27 Provide information about alcohol and other drugs

47 Set limits and boundaries for my children's behavior

33 Be a good adult role model about my own use or non-use of alcohol and other drugs

29 Talk to my children about alcohol and other drugs

29 Send a strong "no-use" message about alcohol and other drug use to my child(ren)

Benefits of the Program

There are several statements below about the possible benefits of the ECFE (K-3) program for you. If you Strongly Agree with the statement, circle SA. If you Agree with the statement, circle A. If you Disagree with the statement, circle D. If you Strongly Disagree with the statement, circle SD.

Our school's ECFE (K-3) program helped me...	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**NA**
feel more competent in my role as a parent	34	50	2	>1	14
have a better understanding of my child(ren)'s behavior	35	47	2	0	15
communicate better with my children	32	51	3	0	14
feel more welcome at school	34	47	3	>1	15
communicate better with my child(ren)'s classroom teacher	20	48	10	>1	22
find support from other parents	43	38	3	0	16
become more familiar with resources in my community	32	48	3	0	17
support my child(ren)'s involvement in school	48	38	2	0	12
share parenting tips with family and friends	37	40	5	0	19

Our school's ECFE (K-3) program helped my child...

(Parents were instructed to complete this section only if they had a child who participated in an ECFE K-3 class also. Of the 241 questionnaires received, 187 had chosen at least one of these benefits. The percentages are based only on the questionnaires which had at least one benefit chosen.)

	SA	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**NA**
communicate better with me	26	60	6	0	7
handle his/her schoolwork better	13	56	14	0	16
make and keep friends better	18	59	9	0	13
be more interested in learning	37	50	5	0	7
feel better about him/herself	45	47	3	0	5
learn about alcohol and other drugs	11	38	13	2	35

Forest Lake
"K-1-2-3"

Program Coordinator: Bonnie Kirkpatrick and Cynthia Behling

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1007 W. Broadway
Forest Lake, MN 55025

Phone Number: (612) 464-1100

Evaluation Site Visits: April 30 and May 20, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview
The Forest Lake ECFE program serves the district's seven elementary schools (Scandia, Columbus, Wyoming, Forest View, Linwood, Forest Lake, and Lino Lakes). The school district covers over 240 square miles. The "K-1-2-3" program was designed to "integrate the roles of families, school personnel, and social service agencies with the long term objective of increasing the child's chances of school success and reducing the child's potential for drug abuse". Each school building was given some flexibility with overall coordination provided by the ECFE(K-3) Coordinator.

Targeted Populations
This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All K-3 children and their parents and families were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Special efforts were made to recruit "high risk" or "at-risk" children and families. Referrals came from classroom teachers, the CHAMP (Chapter I, Assurance of Mastery) staff, school counselors, and the STAR (Students At Risk) teams at each school.

Participating Agencies
The primary agencies involved in this project were the seven elementary school buildings in the Forest Lake school district and the ECFE program. Connections were made with the social service programs in each of the three counties covered by the district, and with the Forest Lake Youth Service Bureau.

Advisory Group
A special ECFE (K-3) Advisory Council was created to advise program staff, evaluate programming, and provide a link between the K-1-2-3 program and the groups the advisory council members represented. The Advisory Council was formed of parents from each school, along with ECFE staff, teachers, administrators, school specialists, professionals and parents representing local agencies and the community. The group met quarterly.

Evaluation Process

On April 20th and May 30th, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Forest Lake. During these visits, twelve ECFE staff, thirteen other school/agency professionals, and six parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire. Because of the efforts of the staff, an additional 118 parents and 30 school/agency professionals also completed questionnaires.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year-old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to K-1 school and other agencies
- Communication with K-1 classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program. A reminder about this program: Seven separate school buildings were involved, and considerable latitude was given for the type of programming available at the local level. It is interesting to note that 30 separate events were held; some of them on-going.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Forest Lake
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Family Fun Nights: "Beach Parties", family board game night, outdoor games night, nature hikes, storytelling, concerts, "England", "Japan", "Saudi Arabia" Curriculum nights: Family Math, Third Grade Math, Third Grade Science, Parents as Partners in Reading, Computers; transitional classes for children entering the next grade; Disability Awareness Night; Robin and Friends Picnic; Sexuality /Peer Pressure
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Two schools offered daytime parenting classes for parents only; childcare provided
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	"Learning Styles"; Nature series; Art; and Celebrating Life were ongoing sessions
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used - but parents from the parenting education classes formed their own support group and met on their own time
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Provided in conjunction with meetings and toy/book/AV lending library avail.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Not used
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used
Other	Volunteering programs were developed by the ECFE program

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- A major element in the success of this program - in the eyes of school administrators, ECFE staff, and parents - was the "Family Coordinator" who was assigned for 10 hours/wk. to each school building.
- Written methods were used to promote the program, including multiple flyers, newsletters, notation on teacher calendars, and inclusion in the Community Education catalogue
- The best response was obtained when children did the marketing. When children were excited about a program, they brought their parents. As one administrator stated, "This was the first time I saw X's dad, and X is in third grade. J was the one who brought his dad here."
- Staff also felt that supportive teachers made a great difference. Classroom teachers conducted promotional activities in their classrooms with the encouragement and support of the "Family Coordinator".
- The connection to ECFE was seen as a mixed blessing. ECFE has a good reputation in the community. As one parent stated, "our parent needs grow. They do not stop when our children enter school." However, when some parents first saw the brochure and the ECFE name, they thought that the program was not for them, since they had "graduated" from ECFE.

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- The program used a "barrier free" approach to programs (helping to resolve childcare, tuition, scheduling and site problems for parents). Transportation, although offered, was not used nor seen as a major barrier for parents.
- This program connected closely with the Chapter 1/Assurance of Mastery (CHAMP) program, with the "STAR" (Students At Risk) team, and with specialists in the district. Classroom lists were checked by teachers and specialists, and invitations were sent to parents.
- Both classroom teachers and the "Family Coordinator" also made personal phone calls to parents.
- The parent educator and "Family Coordinator" were seen as advocates for parents, and several people stated that this could break down barriers for some "at-risk" families who may not feel connected to the school.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

- Of the 124 parents we surveyed and interviewed, 59% had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.
- The same philosophy applies: Concentrate on family strengths, not deficits; work together with families; empower parents and involve them in education; network with agencies.
- Parents have similar needs, although the issues may be slightly different.
- Previous participants have a better idea of what to expect, but new participants may be more excited and enthusiastic about what they perceive as a "new program".
- It is easier to conduct daytime programs for the 0-5 age-group.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- Several of the programs support and enhance concepts that are taught in the classroom (i.e., "Family Math", "Parents as Partners in Reading" "Science Night", "Computers", etc.)
- Regular classroom space, AV equipment, and staff resources are shared - which ECFE staff found helpful.
- Information is shared between the teacher and parents who can collaborate on changing behavior. This program also can tie the parents into the educational plan of their children.
- The "Family Coordinator" makes the link between the ECFE program and the K-3 school.
- Some teachers have attended programs with their own children.
- Several elementary teachers are involved as ECFE(K-3) teachers
- The Forest Lake Youth Service Bureau is supportive of the program, offering in-service for ECFE(K-3) coordinators, serving on the Advisory Council, and referring families to the program.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers

- ECFE(K-3) staff have conducted presentations at grade-level faculty meetings.
- Flyers and a video have been used to promote the program.
- An in-service on family involvement in 1989-1990 helped prepare faculty for this type of program, and a "Learning Styles" workshop increased awareness and involvement of teachers in the ECFE(K-3) program.
- Kindergarten teachers have been given special invitations to visit the Resource Center.
- A needs survey in the beginning of the program helped to increase teachers' awareness and involvement in the program.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems

The Forest Lake School District has several in-school prevention efforts directed at children - the QUEST program, D.A.R.E., classroom presentations, individual and group counseling, and a mentoring program.

Within the ECFE program, there appears to be an underlying philosophy that improving parent/child interaction is a prevention strategy. With the exception of one class held on "Sexuality and Peer Pressure" for parents, it is not apparent that classes were held on the topic of specific problem prevention. There is an interest in connecting with the Parents Communication Network and Parent-Teacher groups to co-sponsor activities.

Benefits

Advisory Committee
Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Partnership between parents and teachers (shared responsibility and accountability; mutual respect).

2 Teacher involvement in the program (more understanding, cooperative relationships, knowledge of child's environment).

3a Parent to parent discussion about handling problems with older children.

3b Improved family relationships through education.

3c Affirming to children as teachers of parents.

3d Building community at the individual school/community level and in the larger Forest Lake community. Less "us and them" and more "we".

Children and parents are active participants

Active involvement of various people in planning (parents, staff, teachers, social service agencies and community members)

Families had fun together, even within the context of school - an alternative to TV.

Having events at the home school, comfort level of parents.

Administrators and parents saw each other in a different context.

Role modeling of different ways of learning in the home.

Enthusiasm of children promotes the program.

Family coordinator at each school.

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list of the top 5:

1 Better parent ("I feel better as a person and found ideas I have been able to use with my family")

2 Connection with other people in the group ("I was new in the community; it gave me a way to get to know other people")

3 It was a fun time, away from the usual routine

4 Childcare and reasonable cost made it possible to participate

5 I got new ideas and opinions from others.

Unexpected Benefits

Participants in interviews and focus groups were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

New people in the community found this program to be helpful.

School administrators are now more aware of the regular (pre-school) ECFE program.

Parents are organizing on their own; meeting on a regular basis to continue the support groups initiated through ECFE (K-3).

The leadership and involvement of individual staff members has increased their self-confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism.

This program breaks down barriers between administrators and parents; when we need to call, later, we have a more positive relationship.

Provides transition to social services.

Parents get to observe their children with peers.

ECFE(K-3) has been a resource for teachers.

Parents volunteer more in the classroom.

Involvement of new families in ECFE. ("We were surprised at the number of people who participated who were not involved in ECFE before.")

People have not used or needed transportation provided by the program.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-5) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

During the first and second year: strong involvement ; people come to programs and keep on coming. Parents are excited about the program.

During the third year: make sure there is diversity in the group; that all areas of the community are being reached.

Partnership between parents and teachers. Learning is supported at home. Better communication from schools that encourage parent involvement. More parental involvement at school.

See families change and groups pull together to help (social services and schools)

Barriers

Advisory Committee
Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 One year grant funding and lack of continuation funds. (This was seen as a major barrier because of 1)skepticism on the part of staff, 2) inability to plan for next year, 3) families, public, and staff may not "jump in" the first year, 4) builds expectations on the part of high-risk families.

2 Family stress - time as parents to juggle activities.

3 Staffing - finding available and qualified staff

4a Childcare.

4b Money (tuition). Some parents may not be comfortable asking for assistance, and some of the guidelines for tuition assistance may not fit.

Transportation - identified early as a need, but promoting the availability of transportation funds and offering transportation assistance was a barrier.

Lack of time to get the program up and running

Lack of understanding about the program on the part of parents.

Parents
Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that

parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. They had only one comment:

- It is helpful to attract male parents: watch the time of day and the type of advertising (suggested that the sessions be topic-specific, action-oriented, specific for Dads)

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- We could get started earlier and hit the ground running. We could publicize the program at some of the initial large events held at the school in the beginning of the year. Everything could be planned and on the school calendar.

- We should increase time. Teachers cannot handle the diverse needs, nor can the "Family Coordinator" manage the demands of the job on 10 hours/wk.

- It would be nice to involve more principals and teachers in parent involvement workshops.

- We need more accessible telephones for teachers to communicate with parents.

- We could provide some additional inservices to ECFE(K-3) staff. Suggestions for topics:

  Community resources
  Parent involvement in school
  Working with elementary age children
  Working with "high risk" children and families
  Working with families who have different value systems
  Identifying parents with low reading ability
  Preventing alcohol and other drug problems: the parent's role
  School policies

Freshwater Education District "Connect"

Program Coordinator: Mary Jo Hofer

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Staples, MN 56479

Phone Number: (218) 894-2439

Evaluation Site Visit: May 13, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview

The Freshwater ECFE program serves the nine elementary schools covered by the education district (Bertha-Hewitt, Browerville, Clarissa, Eagle Bend, Long Prairie, Motley, Parkers Prairie, Pillager, and Staples). The goal of the "Connect" program was to strengthen parenting knowledge and skills so as to "enhance the K-1 child's learning, development, and attitude". The program was designed to reach out to families living within the nine participating school districts to connect families, schools, and communities in a way that enhanced each child's membership in the family, school, and community.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". Because Freshwater serves nine communities, the ECFE program requested funding to serve K-1 grades instead of K-3. All parents and families of children in grades K-1 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Classroom teachers, administrators, and social service agencies were also encouraged to recruit families they felt could especially benefit from this program. Special phone calls were made to "high risk" families. There was clearly a variance in how extensive the efforts were in each of the nine schools, with one school almost exclusively recruiting "high risk" children and their parents.

Participating Agencies

The primary agency involved in this project is the Freshwater Education District and the nine elementary schools it serves. However, interagency partnerships are in place within the district's boundaries, with ECFE and community education playing a major role. Social service and public health agencies were involved on the advisory council, in recruiting participants, and in participating in "special event" sessions.

Advisory Group
The 0-5 ECFE Advisory Council also provides direction for this program. This council is made up of two representatives from each community, elementary principals, community education directors and program staff. They identify topics for parent groups (particularly for special events), give input and advice into programmatic decisions, inform their communities and staff, and assist with other planning needs. There are 20-25 members who meet 3 or 4 times a year.

Evaluation Process
On May 23rd, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in the Freshwater Education District. During this visit, twelve ECFE staff, eleven other school/agency professionals, eight children and eighteen parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire. Twenty-seven additional parents completed surveys about the program at a later time.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to elementary school and other agencies
- Communication with elementary classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Freshwater(K-1)
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Events included special topics or activities. Some events were designed for parents only and some for parents with children.
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Not used.
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	"Connect" sessions were held in each school building, with parents and children attending monthly classes together.
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used.
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used.
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Books and resources on parenting, family life, child development and learning were provided through the resource library. Take-home kits (activities and resources for home use) were developed as resources became available.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Home visits were available, but not used extensively. Used only for "referred" families.
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used
Other	Inter-Active TV was used throughout the year. Topics included parent, child, and family issues. A hotline was established for parents. A developmental expert answered calls and routed inquires.

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- The major recruitment strategy used was the classroom teacher. 64% of the parents who completed a questionnaire said this was a strategy that brought them to the program. Parent/teacher conferences was one opportunity that teachers used. (Staff did note, however, that new and inexperienced teachers did not out-reach at the same level as more experienced teachers.)
- Typical methods were also used to promote the program, including brochures, flyers, newsletters, and the newspaper
- Special posters and TV advertising was also used
- Word-of-mouth between parents helped to promote the program on an informal basis
- Telephone calls to individual parents were also made
- Special events served as a recruitment tool; a way to introduce ECFE to parents in a non-threatening manner.
- An effort was also made to provide food ("Pizza night brought two hundred parents and their kids")

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- The program used a "barrier free" approach to programs (helping to resolve transportation, childcare, meals, tuition, scheduling and site problems for parents and using incentives to attract parents)
- The "goody bag" provided at ECFE sessions became a popular part of the program: parents and children looked forward to the things they could take home and use
- Staff made multiple personal phone calls to the parents and felt that this was the most effective strategy.
- Several of the school and agency staff felt that the non-threatening approach used by ECFE staff was helpful in attracting "at-risk" families
- Staff were also quite flexible in their approach - families knew they could come at their convenience; if they missed one session they could come the next time.
- Classroom teachers and social service agencies refer parents directly to the ECFE program
- One agency professional had attended 0-5 ECFE programs with her own child. She felt her personal experiences helped her promote the program with her clients.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

Of the 45 parents we surveyed and interviewed, all but nine had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.

The program used the same parent/child interaction format as the 0-5 ECFE program. Staff stated that parents were "comfortable" with this format and had come to expect it.

The K-1 program made a stronger effort to involve "at-risk" families.

K-1 is more tightly connected to the elementary school.

Staff observed that children who had participated before were more aware of the expectations and "knew how to behave" in an ECFE setting. Parents also knew the routine and were more comfortable volunteering.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-1 School and Other Agencies

- This program has a natural connection to the K-1 school. Classroom teachers are employed as parent educators in the ECFE program.
- Prior to the start of the program, a joint in-service was held between ECFE and K-1 classroom staff, where they brainstormed needs for the program.
- ECFE used materials, AV equipment, and classrooms at the elementary schools
- ECFE "taps into" the resources of social service agencies for needs assessment
- Public health promotes the ECFE program
- ECFE was already a part of established formal and informal networks in the Freshwater Ed District area. Staff felt that this helped to get the program up and running in a shorter time.

Communication with K-1 Classroom Teachers

- The advisory council helps to keep communication lines open.
- ECFE staff drop into classrooms periodically
- The developmental task force made up of K-3 teachers is another group with whom the ECFE staff communicates
- Teachers receive flyers and add their own comments
- Teachers attend special events.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems

- Johnson Institute materials are used as a part of the curriculum
- Some of the staff are trained in "QUEST: Skills for Growing" which is used in some of the elementary schools
- David Wilmes' "Parenting for Prevention" (Johnson Institute) classes are planned
- There appeared to be a discrepancy between what staff believed they were teaching about alcohol and other drugs and what parents felt they were learning. Three written comments from parents stated, "Not sure of extent of alcohol and other drug education"; "Have not observed any of these [prevention] strategies used" and "[The teacher] was not comfortable enough at this point for the parents to feel comfortable."

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-1) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Bonding between parent and child
2 Effective special events
3 Parents learned to handle behavioral concerns
4 Parents learned about their strengths
5 It was fun!

Parents are more comfortable
Parents learned new activities to use with their children
Role modeling by staff and parents
Snack time
Men participated
Parents are more confident working with their children
One-to-one special time
Parents learned to play
Parents learned about the developmental age of their children

Parents
Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-1) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Special time with the child - one to one, uninterrupted

2 Parent contact with other parents - sharing parenting techniques, networking

3 Bond with teachers and school - know what is going on

4 Up-to-date, current information

5 Learn new things (science night)

Parents learn how teachers are handling situations, i.e. attention span

Children make friends and play

Fun!!

Unexpected Benefits
Participants in focus groups and interviews were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

Teachers and the system better understand parents by watching parents and children together.

Sharing between districts is helpful.

There was not the need for transportation funds as they first thought.

We discovered some "at risk" children that would not have been identified.

Some at-risk children are coping well and add to the group.

Teachers have learned from the children.

Couldn't believe that the targeted children and youth, and their parents, actually attended.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-1) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

High risk families are more comfortable at school.

More completion of homework assignments.

Involvement of fathers in education.

Improved attitudes of parents and children.

Increased cooperation.

Attendance at conferences improved.

Children's pride in having parents at school and involved.

Parents are recruiting parents.

Breakdown of denial about how parents behavior affects children.

Children

Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

"I liked it when mom read to me"

"We had snacks"

"Mom and I could be together without my brothers and sisters."

"My dad and I learned about stuff."

Barriers

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-1) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Lack of resources and materials

2 Finding staff, because of the time involved

3 Recruiting parents and children

4 Planning time

5 Scheduling

Balance (at-risk and healthier families)

Not enough take-home packets

Providing enough food

Continuity; one month to another

Parents

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-1) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Reminders are important and must be timely.
- Make sure the advertised benefits are actually offered.
- Allow enough time for parents to talk to each other.
- Respect our experience and our knowledge.
- Resources are helpful: take-home kits, resource lists, book exchanges.
- Parents need more input into the topics that are discussed.
- Be organized and prepared.
- Teach concrete coping skills.

Barriers, Continued

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

They didn't want to change a thing.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- More consistency with notification and class scheduling. The program should be "Every Monday of the Month" in order to insure credibility.
- Get started earlier.
- Make sure parents have involvement in selecting topics. Pull in outside resources.
- Increase to 2 times a month.
- Have more resources available for teachers.
- Add a second year.
- Increase staff planning time. Also allow more time for coordinating, communicating and meeting more often.
- Inservice needs: group process; team teaching; time management; facilitation; role clarification. Share with next year's staff what was done this year.

Monticello
"Parent Involvement Program"

Program Coordinator: Pam Lindberg and Kay Douglass

Address: Monticello School District
Box 897
Monticello, MN 55362

Phone Number: (612) 295-2925

Evaluation Site Visit: May 28, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview

The Monticello ECFE program serves Monticello's Pinewood East and West elementary schools. When the Monticello Community Education Chemical Health and Wellness Task Force also received funds to provide parenting information to parents of school age children, resources were pooled to serve the entire elementary school (K-5). The resulting "Parent Involvement Program" was designed to provide parenting information to parents of school-age children, using the QUEST parent component as a basis.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All parents and families of children in grades K-5 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Classroom teachers and administrators were also asked to provide a list of the families they felt could especially benefit from this program, and this list was used as a basis for providing special invitations to parents. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify "high risk" families.

Participating Agencies

The primary agency involved in this project is the Monticello school district. Communication channels were established with Women/Infants/Children (WIC) and Head-Start program, but no agencies other than the schools provided direct services to families. However, there was a clear link within the school district itself to the school's student assistance team, the chemical health task force, to the peer helper program, to the ECFE program and Community Education.

Advisory Group

A special ECFE (K-5) Advisory Group was created to identify topics for parent groups, give direction to the staff, and verbally evaluate the program. The Advisory group was formed primarily of parents of school-age children, with representation of K-5 staff, ECFE advisory council members and the community education task force. There were eight members who met 3 or 4 times during the grant period.

Evaluation Process
On May 28th, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Monticello. During this visit, four ECFE staff, eleven other school/agency professionals, twelve children and six parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to elementary school and other agencies
- Communication with elementary classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Monticello
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Family Fun Night Illusion Theatre: "Family" Parents as Sex Educators presentation Children, the Challenge (first grade reading program info night)
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	STEP groups
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Speaker Nights followed by parent/child sessions: "Communication Between Parent and Child and Parents and School" (Communication, Discipline, and Self-Esteem were follow-up sessions) "Celebrating the Family" (Warm Fuzzy Night, Family Cooperation, Family Meetings were follow-up sessions) "Positive Prevention - Talking about Drugs with the Family" (Peer Pressure, Attitudes and Values, and Decision Making were follow-up sessions)
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Provided in conjunction with meetings
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	The ECFE outreach worker promoted the program as a part of regular ECFE home visits
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used
Other	

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- The courses were offered free of charge to eliminate any possible economic barriers.
- Typical methods were used to promote the program, including brochures, flyers, newsletters, and the ECFE Catalogue
- Opportunities were sought to promote the program at school conferences and open-houses
- Word-of-mouth helped to promote the program on an informal basis
- Elementary students made announcements over the school loudspeaker about ECFE (K-5) events

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- The program used a "barrier free" approach to programs (helping to resolve transportation, childcare, meals, tuition, scheduling and site problems for parents and using incentives to attract parents)
- Referrals were sought from classroom teachers, elementary counselors, and administrators
- Staff felt that the most effective method for reaching "high risk" families was personal phone calls to the parents.
- Children were assigned tasks for sessions; parents had to bring their children and so they stayed themselves

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

Of the 6 parents we surveyed and interviewed, all had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.

Staff perceived a difference in comfort level in the parents who had attended ECFE before. Staff reported prior ECFE participants both knew what was expected of them and had higher expectations of the K-5 Program (i.e., the same level of parent-child interaction they had experienced before).

This program used the ECFE parent-child interaction model.

"Speaker nights" were used in the ECFE (K-5) program.

Staffing was slightly different: the K-5 program did not require licensed family educators and more men were involved as educators than in the 0-5 ECFE program.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-5 School and Other Agencies

- Curriculum is shared between both programs (QUEST)
- Regular classroom space is used
- K-5 teachers are "hand picked" to be teachers in the ECFE(K-5) Program; school administrators felt that other classroom teachers might not be as involved or aware of the program
- Teachers were asked to promote the program at conference times and open-houses by distributing flyers and talking about the program
- As Individual Education Plans are developed along with Outcome Based Education, one administrator felt that this program could be integrated into the IEP or OBE Plan

Communication with K-5 Classroom Teachers

- ECFE staff meet at the beginning of the program with all teachers

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems
This program is tightly connected to the district's chemical health program in five major ways:

- In order to expand the program to fourth and fifth graders, district chemical health funds and the ECFE(K-3) grant were combined
- A representative from ECFE serves on the chemical health advisory council
- High school student leaders were used as role models and educators for K-5 students and their parents. This was perceived by the parents and the students as very effective and they were asked to return for a second presentation on refusal skills.
- The QUEST parenting component is used as the core of this program's curriculum.
- Chemical health coordinators are used as teachers in the K-5 program. This increased male involvement as teachers and participants.

There is a high level of agreement among staff that all of the prevention objectives listed on the survey were met.

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 This program makes a link with ECFE and the elementary school

2 Children see parents take an interest in school

3 Having a parenting program for K-5

4 Parents see that the school is open to them

5 The message is given from the school: family is important

Awareness of community resources at all levels

Spending quality time with children

Information about family relationships and about drug awareness and communication

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 The program helps children and parents communicate better

2 Helped us look at family values

3 Got to know our children better

4 We were involved in having fun with our children; not competing

5 Older students talked to us and shared their experiences

Information, handouts, ideas

Other options in parenting

Benefits, Continued

Unexpected Benefits
Participants in interviews and focus groups were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

The attendance at the opening fun night far exceeded expectations. Over 450 people attended; many parents "lingered on" and received informal counseling from the professional staff in attendance.

The topics generated considerable interest (through QUEST curriculum).

High school students were extremely successful with parents; it was assumed they would be effective with students, but staff were surprised at how well they captured the attention and interest of the parents.

Participants in interviews and focus groups were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-5) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

Parents and children are able to articulate the goals of the program.

The program meets diverse needs within the community.

Repeaters: people come back to additional sessions.

Positive evaluations.

Getting help for one or two "high risk" families.

Improvement in family relationships.

Children
Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

"When Mom and Dad and I were together I talked about drugs with them."

We learned how to talk together. (Children could site specific skills.)

This was a special time with my parents.

It was fun. (I liked...drawing stuff, playing games, writing about places our family could visit, seeing other friends, the teacher.)

"I liked it when the big kids came and they said you shouldn't drink or smoke."

Barriers

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1a Short notice for implementation

1b Reaching targeted people

3 Scheduling conflicts

4 Program format

5 Determining needs

Weather

Time

Deciding on topics

Coordination: Everything started up new at the same time

Parents

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Watch times so they don't conflict with community activities
- Vary the nights so you can reach different families. Consider Saturday or Sunday afternoons.
- Schedule more programs on Friday nights in order to involve fathers. Families might be looking for something to do; Friday evening doesn't interfere with sleep times or homework for children.
- Find more ways to involve mom and dad together.
- Maintain the ECFE parent-child interaction model. It keeps parents involved with their children. Allow more time in groups.
- Keep high school students involved!

Barriers, Continued

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

They didn't want to change a thing.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff and other school faculty were asked to comment about what they might change if they could "do it over again," or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Make it smaller in scope. K-5 involved two buildings and multiplied communication problems.
- Provide better training for facilitators. Since this program uses the QUEST curriculum, everyone involved needs QUEST training.
- Better inform everyone. Generate more excitement among faculty. Use teachers to bring in parents and children.
- Hire a full-time coordinator for marketing and coordination. Program staff did not anticipate the amount of administration time.
- Add a preparation session for each grade transition that will explain expectations of students and let parents know how they can help.
- Maintain the program longer. Nine months is not enough time to establish a program, particularly for "high risk" families.
- Add home visits and more individual contacts for recruiting "high risk" families.

Moorhead
"Literacy and Parenting Partnership"

Program Coordinator: Lauri Winterfeldt-Shanks

Address: Moorhead Public Schools, Townsite Center
810 - 4th Ave. S.
Moorhead, MN 56560

Phone Number: (218) 233-2499

Evaluation Site Visit: May 14, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview
Through this project, the Moorhead ECFE program conducted a pilot program at Thomas Edison Elementary School. The "Literacy and Parenting Program" was designed to provide after-school field trips, homework help for students after school, and afternoon programs on literacy and parenting for parents. This program did not use the typical ECFE parent/child interaction format.

Targeted Populations
The program was open to any family with children K-3 within the Thomas Edison School area. However, priority was given to parents who wanted to improve their literacy and parenting skills. The program was tightly connected to Chapter 1 and "English as a Second Language (ESL)" programs at Thomas Edison and concentrated on offering services to Hispanic families. Referrals to this program were made almost exclusively through the school system.

Participating Agencies
The primary agencies involved in this project were the Moorhead ECFE program, Thomas Edison School and the Moorhead Adult Basic Education program at the Area Learning Center. Connections were also made with AFDC caseworkers, Headstart personnel, and the Clay-Wilkin Opportunity Council.

Advisory Group
There was no official "advisory group" for this project. However, key personnel who were involved in the project, including Thomas Edison administrators, Adult Basic Education and Early Childhood Family Education staff, English as a Second Language and Chapter 1 staff and "Literacy and Parenting" instructors met monthly.

Evaluation Process

On May 14th, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Moorhead. During this visit, five ECFE staff, seven other school/agency professionals, eight children and three parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

The information in this report is a compilation the information gathered through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 school and other agencies
- Communication with K-3 classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Moorhead
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	"Family Fun" - after-school field trips in Fargo-Moorhead and other fun activities were held
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Ongoing classes were held for parents, with an emphasis on "Literacy and Parenting"
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Not used.
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used, except informally as a part of "Literacy and Parenting" classes.
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Homework Help was offered one afternoon each week and conducted by Chapter 1 paraprofessionals
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Resource materials were provided at "Literacy and Parenting" classes
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Home visits were used extensively, along with frequent phone calls
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Offered by referral only.
Other	Adult Basic Education offered assistance to parents in completing their GEDs

Recruitment
Although all families with children in grades K-3 at Thomas Edison elementary school were welcome to participate in this program, concentrated efforts were made to recruit "at-risk" youth and their families. The title, "Literacy and Parenting Program" and the initial targeting approaches may have contributed to the major recruitment problems this project faced.

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:
- The program used a "barrier free" approach to programs (helping to resolve transportation, childcare, tuition, scheduling and site problems for parents)
- The major referral network was the school. Referrals were sought from classroom teachers, Chapter I staff, social service agencies, and administrators
- Staff felt that the most effective method for reaching "high risk" families was parent-to-parent "word of mouth".

Comments:
In order for a family to be a part of the "LAP" program, both children and parents had to agree to participate. Referral into the program came from the school to ECFE, whose staff then followed up with numerous phone calls and home visits.

Based on the forms used and the messages given to administration and staff, some teachers felt that they had to assess the family, and even label them as "at risk". They felt reluctant to make judgements about families, and hence were reluctant to refer.

Cultural barriers also were a problem. Parents felt that the all-white staff had difficulty recruiting in a highly Hispanic neighborhood. Parents also stated that other families may have felt singled out and labeled.

Suggestions for boosting participation in the future were:
- Hire past participants to recruit
- Hire recruiters (including home visitors) who are of the same race and culture as the people they are trying to recruit
- Use Adult Basic Education staff as partners in the initial home visit

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds
Of the 3 parents we surveyed and interviewed, none had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.

This program does not use a parent-child interaction format.

Program staff spend more time with children in 0-5; more time with parents in this program.

Teachers do the recruiting in this program, not ECFE staff.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- The LAP program supported and enhanced the K-3 curriculum. Children were provided after-school homework help, which proved very popular. Children were trying to "sneak into" Homework Help sessions. One administrator stated that this program could fit well with "Outcome Based Education", since it provides needed correctives.

- The ECFE program worked closely with English as a Second Language and Chapter I programs.

- Chapter 1 paraprofessionals were hired as the LAP teachers which helped with coordination. Tutors know the teachers, students, and the school system, so coordination happens naturally.

- The major social service agency connected to this program is Adult Basic Education (ABE). The LAP program used transportation money to help provide transportation for ABE students (who also had children in the LAP program) and ABE provided help to parents in obtaining their GED.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers

- ECFE staff attended staff meetings to promote the program, at which time they distributed supplemental material, including referral forms.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems
Thomas Edison elementary school uses "Growing Healthy" curriculum which has no parent component.

There is a strong link made in the original grant application between literacy and drug abuse. The major strategy used was referral to counseling for parents. There seems to be little emphasis on the role of parent. in alcohol and drug use prevention and there is no clear evidence that this project is tied into the school district's overall chemical health efforts.

Benefits

Advisory Group

This program did not have an official advisory group, so members of the ECFE staff were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Created a positive atmosphere: kids were trying to "sneak into" homework sessions

2 Personality changes; increased self-esteem

3 Increased performance in school

4 Increased involvement of the parents at school

5 Parents became advocates at a local and legislative level

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 given in order of priority:

1 Childcare provided

2 Accomplished GED

3 Bonding with children outside of the home

4 Chance to be with other adults; to exchange ideas

5 Developed relationships with staff and other people

Transportation

Opportunity to go to school

Chance to enjoy time with children

Learned child CPR

Benefits, Continued

Unexpected Benefits

Participants in interviews and focus groups were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

Increased self-confidence among parents.

Parents have expressed a willingness to get involved with teen pregnancy prevention - talking to Hispanic teenagers.

People with a higher reading level than expected came.

We didn't think it would be as hard to get people to come.

Parents became advocates for their own program - even made phone calls to legislators.

Participants in interviews and focus groups were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-3) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

Parents meet their goals.

Parents pass the word on to others.

Parents continue to attend.

Improved functioning of the child, including an increase in child's academic performance.

Parents own academic growth.

Parents involvement in their child's education.

Children

Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

"I got help with my reading and math."

"It was fun" (we learned, we worked, we got snacks, we played games)

"I liked...the teachers, I have a friend here, we read, I get help with homework"

"My mom and dad like this class because I come home happy."

Barriers

Advisory Committee

We did not meet with the advisory team as a group during this site visit. The following is a list of the most common concerns listed by ECFE(K-3) staff and other professionals. They are not prioritized.

Problems with recruitment

Skepticism on the part of parents

Cannot include children if parents choose not to be involved

Cultural issues

Referral system between the school and the ECFE(K-3) program

Parents

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Lack of motivation may be a problem for parents. Staff need to "take them by the hand".
- Fear of failure on the part of parents can be a barrier.
- Lack of trust on the part of parents can be a barrier.
- You need to have Hispanics working in the center in order to recruit other parents.

Comments and Reflections

Even though only a small number of people benefitted from this program, the enthusiasm and sincerity of the parents was impressive. According to the parents, this is the first time anyone has reached out and offered what they really want and need - education. We were also highly impressed by the quality of staff in this program. They appear well-selected for their responsibilities, warm and competent, and clearly dedicated to their mission.

Barriers, Continued

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

"I'd like to see more movies, play more games, paint more pictures, draw."

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff and other school faculty were asked to comment about what they might change if they could "do it over again," or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Hire Hispanics as program staff to promote the program.
- Involve parents more closely in the program.
- Allow children to participate even if their parents won't or can't be involved.
- Have classroom teachers more involved in recruitment.
- Make a better link with the Parent Teacher Organization in providing collaborative programs and recruiting participants.
- Increase team work among all program pieces.

Proctor-Hermantown "Family Connection"

Program Coordinator: Claudia Otis, Lucy Carlson, Lynn Haglin

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Proctor, MN 55810

Phone Number: (218)-624-4869

Evaluation Site Visit: May 30, 1991

Project Overview

The Proctor-Hermantown ECFE program serves both Proctor and Hermantown elementary schools. The "Family Connection" program was designed to "demonstrate that providing educational support services to parents will enable them to help their children access a solid foundation for lifelong growth and development through a process whereby parents will experience less stress and greater enjoyment in their childrearing." Key aspects program aspects were structured parent/child educational programs, deliberate attempts to increase communication between families and schools, and in-service training for staff members.

Targeted Populations

This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All parents and families of children in grades K-3 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Classroom teachers and administrators were also asked to refer families they felt could especially benefit from this program. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify "high risk" families.

Participating Agencies

The primary agencies involved in this project are the Proctor-Hermantown school districts. Communication was established with area social service and health care agencies in order to identify resources for families. The Duluth ECFE program provided speakers, and community agencies assisted with special events.

Advisory Group

A special ECFE (K-3) Advisory Group was created to assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program and to develop community understanding and support. Each school district had members on the advisory board, including K-3 teaching and administrative staff, community education and ECFE representatives, school social workers and psychologists, a librarian, and parents.

Evaluation Process
On May 30th, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Proctor-Hermantown. During this visit, five ECFE staff, nine other school/agency professionals, ten children and six parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to elementary school and other agencies
- Communication with elementary classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Proctor-Hermantown
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Several special event sessions were held: "Holiday Traditions Party", "Fun with Music Movement", and tours of St. Mary's Medical Center, Police Station and Fire Hall and Strawberry Ridge Farm. One parent workshop was held, entitled "Children's Anxiety Over the Gulf War". The "Kindergarten Connection" was offered to introduce new students and their parents to school.
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Not used
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Each school held a kick-off, with weekly ongoing sessions held in each community, divided into K-1 and 2-3rd grade classes.
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	The ECFE staff developed their own curriculum, with materials for parents provided as a part of sessions.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Home visits were not used. Extensive use of phone calling was used.
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used
Other	Teacher Inservices were held, in cooperation with Duluth ECFE. Cooperative parent/teacher workshops were also held.

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- Staff felt that a key to the success of this program was the home/school liaison staff members (eventually called "Family Connection Resource Person"), who were able to establish strong ties in each of the elementary schools with parents, teachers, administrative and support staff.
- Typical methods were used to promote the program, including brochures, flyers, and media coverage.
- Teachers recruited parents, which staff felt was very successful.
- A refrigerator magnet with "Family Connection" logo was mailed to all potential participants. Staff felt it was well worth the investment.
- Previous participants were contacted.
- Parents were informed about the program at kindergarten round-up.
- Telephone calls were made to all kindergarten families to tell them about the program. New families were also called, as were participants in weekly sessions.
- Materials were sent home with children.
- Special bulletin boards were created in each school.
- The program was promoted during times that parents already were present, such as parent/teacher conferences.

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- The "Family Connection Resource Person" met with each teacher, and then followed up on teacher referrals. Staff felt that the liaison meeting with teachers helped them talk about their concerns and identify at-risk families.
- The program reduced barriers by to helping to resolve transportation, childcare, meals, tuition, scheduling and site problems for parents. Although a "soup and sandwich" dinner was tried, staff felt that offering meals was not necessary or helpful in recruiting families.
- The initial perception that this program targeted "high risk" families was seen as a barrier. Staff had to work hard to promote the idea that the program was for everyone.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

Of the six parents we surveyed and interviewed, five had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.

- This program used the same parent/child interaction format as in the 0-5 ECFE program. Staff felt their experience in 0-5 ECFE programs translated well to this age group.

- The number of participants were generally smaller in K-3 than in 0-5. Staff felt that it would take time to build up participation levels.

- More dads participated in K-3 than in 0-5.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- Teachers recruit parents, using personalized letters home.
- "Family Connection Resource" people and other ECFE staff attend inservices with classroom teachers.
- "Family Connection Resource" people work with classroom teachers to assist in identifying "high risk" families.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers

- ECFE staff attended staff meetings and made presentations about the program.
- There seemed to be unanimous agreement that this program was well-communicated to classroom teachers and administrators. As one administrator stated, "there was always something on my desk about this program."
- Joint inservices seemed to build trust, communication, and rapport between the two groups.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems

- It appears that the "Family Connection" program is not yet tightly connected to prevention approaches in the district. The chemical health coordinator attributed this to the fact that chemical health efforts have, in the past, concentrated on the secondary schools.
- A representative from ECFE is an official part of the chemical health advisory council.
- Topics chosen for parent/child interaction classes and for the parent sessions did not appear to specifically concentrate on alcohol and other drugs.
- It was perceived by many throughout Proctor/Hermantown that improvement in general parenting skills and in parent involvement in school could reduce problems with alcohol and other drugs.

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Quality time for children and parents together - uninterrupted, in a non-threatening atmosphere

2 Builds connection between families and schools, families and teachers, and ECFE and the K-3 Family Connection Program

3 Liaison phone contact helped bring awareness of program and bridge gap between parents and school

4 Support system for teachers, in-services, resources, networking

5 Parenting inservices, especially those offered at grade levels, because of teacher involvement

Kindergarten connection tied school and parents together

Enthusiasm of kids and parents who have been involved

Created a comfortable environment

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Special events were enjoyed by children and parents

2 Support between parents

3 One on one time with children

4 Support of facilitators for parents

5 Helped parents enjoy children for who they are instead of what they do

Children feel special being in K-3 ECFE program

Many methods of parenting were shared

Development of children learned and better understood

Children's programming enhances what was learned in school

Program was accommodating for parents

Unexpected Benefits

Participants in focus groups and interviews were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

The program was more personalized than one administrator expected. The ECFE staff were in school, talking with teachers. Another administrator stated that "parents are less likely to call the principal or the office, because they use the liaison as a resource to get general information about school."

Teachers started attending the Parent Teacher Organization meetings as a result of participating in ECFE(K-3) program.

A high-powered speaker increased teacher involvement; they requested follow-up sessions.

Connections were made to other resources in the community.

Social service staff expressed surprise at how fast the program grew and how many things were offered to parents and to the school.

The mixing of Proctor and Hermantown families was also seen as a benefit.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-3) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

Number of families involved in the program.

Improved communication between parents and their children.

Children perceive that there are adults who care about them.

Children value education.

Schools and parents are working cooperatively.

Number of returnees.

Children

Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

The teachers were nice. The teachers comfort us.

I got lots of good ideas.

Lots of activities to do...field trips, potluck suppers.

I had time away from my brother.

Parents get to go to a different room and talk about things.

I meet my friends.

Barriers

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Lack of home base. Physical space. Have to use pre-school space, no space in each of the five buildings.

2 We are limited in terms of staff time. Required flexibility on part of staff.

3 Communicating new program and concepts to parents, teachers, and administrators in five different schools.

4 Scheduling - conflicting activities - particularly with sports.

5 Preparation of sessions - didn't have a resource library.

Parents

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- These programs will help bring the school and community closer together. They help you become more involved as a parent.
- It is important to have some child time and important to have parent time: to learn and grow as a parent.
- Facilitators should get much feedback from parents about selecting topics, speakers, activities, etc.
- Publicize the program well so many see the opportunity to get involved. Do with 0-5 ECFE also so families can find out about programs early.
- Try to make children's activities as unisex as possible, so they are interesting to both boys and girls.
- Sibling care is important, it helps to keep the costs down for coming to the program.
- Don't be afraid to ask parents who are involved for help. Parents can provide letters of recommendation, call legislators, etc.

Barriers, Continued

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

I wish it could be longer.

"I wish our parents could stay longer". And, conversely, "I wish our parents didn't have to stay so long."

I wish we didn't have to put away the games.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Start at the beginning of the school year.
- Need additional facilities. Find space - somewhere - at each school.
- Have teachers and other staff really involved with the outreach: send things home, make recommendations, referrals, etc. Build more bridges between teachers and ECFE staff
- Spend more time on specific prevention projects or information.
- Expand to involve K-4
- Provide inservice opportunities for ECFE staff on data privacy, home/school liaison and communication.
- Find ways to get to know the school system more quickly.
- Clear up terminology and misconceptions on the part of classroom teachers about parenting education (i.e., "we need to *teach* these parents; they need to *learn* these things.")

Robbinsdale
Expanded ECFE Program

Program Coordinator: Kerry Froehlich and Delores Fletcher

Address: Independent School District 281
(Robbinsdale Area Schools)
4148 Winnetka Avenue North
New Hope, MN 55427

Phone Number: 612-537-2270

Date of Evaluation Site Visit: May 16, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview

The Robbinsdale ECFE program serves children and their families at three Robbinsdale elementary schools: Cavanagh, Lincoln, and Northport. At each school children at a different grade level and their families were invited to program activities. The program was developed "to help parents recognize and meet the emotional, intellectual, physical and social needs of children, to promote healthy self-concept development among all family members, to provide a forum for parents to share and learn a variety of child-rearing approaches and to provide learning experiences for parents and children."

Targeted Populations

This program generally followed the the concept of "universal access". Children and their families from the 5's Alive program at Cavanagh, the 1st grade at Lincoln, and the 2nd grade at Northport were invited to program activities. Classroom teachers, principals and social workers provided referrals of families they felt could especially benefit from this program. Such families were given special invitations via priority phone calls to these parents, and appointments for home or school visits for these families. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify individual "at-risk" families, however, classroom performance and lack of parental involvement were two major factors for teacher referrals. Two schools were selected for this program because they had the highest percentage of children and families who were considered at-risk. At-risk factors were considered part of the criteria for being involved in programs at the third school.

Participating Agencies

The primary organizations involved in this project are the Robbinsdale ECFE and the three Robbinsdale elementary schools.

Advisory Group
A special ECFE Advisory Group was created for the ECFE expansion program. Because the program followed the 0-5 ECFE model and was fairly well developed, the program coordinators questioned whether there was a need for a separate Advisory Group. The opinion was that in the coming years, the Advisory Group would be more involved. The Advisory Group included six parents participating in the K-3 program, four ECFE staff, three K-3 classroom teachers, three principals, and a chemical awareness coordinator for a total of 17 members. This group met twice during the grant period.

Evaluation Process
On May 16th, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Robbinsdale. During this visit, eight ECFE staff, six school/agency professionals, seven children and nine parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to elementary school and other agencies
- Communication with elementary classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Robbinsdale
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Gym night and Minnesota Zoo field trip. Many families referred to the program did not participate in the ongoing classes but did go to the zoo.
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Not used
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Six week parent/child sessions. Topics for parents were: Developmental Characteristics of the Focused Child, Communication with Self and Others, Problem Solving, Giving Choices, Preventing Substance Abuse In Young Children, Cooperation/Encouragement, and Celebrating Families. For children the topics started with self-esteem and paralleled those for parents during the remaining sessions.
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Provided in conjunction with meetings
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	K-3 ECFE coordinator visited parents at home as a special invitation to attend ongoing classes
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used
Other	

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- Brochures or flyers were used to promote program
- Letters were sent to families whose child(ren) were in the selected grade or program at participating elementary schools
- Telephone calls to families were made by the K-3 ECFE staff
- Home visits were made as a special invitation and to make arrangements for attending
- Efforts were made to get teacher referrals and recruit those referrals to ongoing classes especially for the second six week of sessions
- The courses were offered free of charge to eliminate any possible economic barriers.

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- School characteristics were used to identify those school populations with more children and families with factors considered to be at risk
- Referrals were sought from classroom teachers and those referred were invited by phone call and/or personal visit to attend ongoing classes
- Phone calls were made to parents by K-3 ECFE staff person
- Home visits were made to invite families to attend ongoing classes and make arrangements for transportation and their childcare needs and to find out about the family and their interests
- Providing snacks and meals before all sessions, providing childcare (10 months to 12 years), and helping to resolve transportation problems (taxi cabs, going to homes and transporting)

Ten of 17 professionals interviewed disagreed that most parents in grades K-3 knew about the program. However, 14 of the 17 agreed that special efforts were made to recruit parents and children of at risk families.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds
Two of the six parents surveyed had attended ECFE programs before their child(ren) entered school.

This program used the ECFE parent-child interaction model. The K-3 expansion staff members are current or past staff members of the 0-5 ECFE program. They felt there were lots of similarities to the 0-5 ECFE.

Staff thought the discussions and interaction of the K-3 participants were more sophisticated. They perceived differences in the communication of those parents who had attended ECFE before. They used terms like "empowering of children" which they were probably exposed to in the previous ECFE experience.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- Principals, K-3 classroom teachers, social workers, , custodians, and cooks from the participating elementary schools were involved in the ECFE expansion program.
- K-3 teachers and some other staff referred families directly to K-3 ECFE program.
- Ideas were shared between K-3 elementary classroom teachers and K-3 ECFE staff. They also planned and conducted drug awareness at the same time. Materials used in the K-3 ECFE drug prevention sessions was provided by the chemical awareness specialist in District 281.
- The three principals from the participating elementary schools served on the advisory committee. They provided class lists to promoted the program.
- K-3 ECFE staff was invited to and attended school open houses to do outreach.
- K-3 classroom teachers helped with field trip organization.
- K-3 classroom teachers promoted K-3 ECFE classes by sending home letters and flyers.
- K-3 ECFE used regular classroom space.
- According to K-3 ECFE staff and elementary principals, classroom teachers were very supportive of the K-3 ECFE program. They viewed the program as another resource for them and another vehicle to increase parental involvement in school.
- Fifteen of the 17 ECFE K-3 staff and other professionals agreed or strongly agreed that the program had the support of K-3 teachers.
- Nine out the 17 surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the program is coordinated with other community services and agencies.
- The K-3 ECFE staff referred individuals to other community agencies for assistance with things like food, clothing, and getting a GED (don't Abbr.).

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers
The advisory committee thought that communication of the K-3 ECFE staff, with the elementary school staff and with other community programs was a real strength. In addition to the communication necessary for the cooperative activities above to take place, the following are some other means of communicating with K-3 classroom teachers.

- K-3 ECFE coordinator talked with teachers before each session to share ideas.
- Phone communication to share curriculum information and ideas.
- Updates to share information about referrals and other relevant topics.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems
Drug awareness sessions were conducted in the K-3 ECFE drug program using curriculum provided by the chemical awareness specialist in District 281. These sessions were planned and conducted in conjunction with classroom teachers drug awareness sessions.

- Sixty to eighty percent of the K-3 staff and other professionals indicated that various alcohol and other drug use prevention strategies were used as part of the program.
- Either all or five out of the six parents surveyed responded that the program helped them use the alcohol and other drug use problem prevention strategies listed on the survey.

It appears that in this program that a higher percentage of parents responded that they learned prevention strategies than the percentage of professional connected with the program indicated that the strategies were taught.

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Transportation, child care, and meals provided so families could attend

2 Opened communications including about feelings

3 Connections developed between families and educators, parents and school

4 Parental support; not the only parent dealing with certain issues

5 Helped parents become more comfortable with school and school activities

Topics well chosen; helpful to families

Social time for child(ren)

Helpful for families and children to get to know each other

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Strengthen families

2 Hook-up with other community services

3 Gives parents more support

4 Gives children more self-esteem

5 Children see parents being involved at school

Teaches children how to communicate with parents

Shows children its alright to make mistakes; we all do

Special one on one time with child

Services provided for everyone

Learn about positive discipline of children

Unexpected Benefits

Participants in interviews and focus groups were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

The assertiveness, enthusiasm, and willingness of parents to volunteer.

The heartfelt answers from parents. They were able to focus on their feelings and turn the discussion to their topics.

Helps other siblings as well as child for whom the program is designed.

Participants in interviews and focus groups were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-5) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

More parental involvement in programs, especially more by fathers.

Improved parenting skills

Better communication with parents

Attitude change of parents and children

Children approve of program and activities

Parent and children doing this together

Children

Children talked about what they liked about the program and drew pictures to what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

"I liked the 'tell a story' game."

Eating supper at school with my family.

We talked about feelings.

"My mom liked having my brother there."

Food: pizza and chicken.

Barriers

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Large group size inhibits discussions

2 Difficult to reach some who may benefit; fear of school

3 Parent contacts difficult; communication

4 Not enough time to cover topics

5 Poor parent follow-through

Parents may focus on other siblings

Because of transportation, childcare, and meals being provided, not all serious about topic(s)

Parents

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (Responses are not prioritized.)

- Have more sessions (more than six and possibly year round).
- Have longer sessions with more discussion time for parents.
- Have more time together as a family at the end of sessions and at special events.
- Increase program participation, especially by males. Phone calls and home visits were big pluses. Classroom teachers could help promote program.
- Have options for parents to come without child(ren).
- Have special groups for single parents; could be a support group.
- Have childcare available for younger children.
- Great program. Hope they continue it.
- Helps other siblings as well as child who program is designed for.

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

There were no responses by children about changes.

What Would You Do Differently?

- Create a team between the K-3 ECFE staff and classroom teachers
- K-3 ECFE staff would like to see more sharing and exchanging of curriculum with classroom teachers
- More special events and projects with parents
- Involve parents with classroom teachers

Comments and Reflections

Strengths

- Home visits and phone calls to prospective and attending participants. This type of personal contact seems to be a significant incentive or encouragement for some people to attend these programs.
- Communication between groups. It was suggested that there be more communication between ECFE staff and classroom teachers and classroom teachers and parents. Given the time this effort was operating, many lines of communication were very well developed.

Areas for Improvement

- Increasing participation by fathers in the programs
- A variety of events or activities which might attract participants with different interests

St. Paul
"Families and School Together"

Program Coordinator: Elaine Raspel-Borth and Patricia Copa

Address: St. Paul Public Schools Community Education
360 Colborne
St. Paul, MN 55102

Phone Number: (612) 293-5275

Evaluation Site Visit: June 3, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview

This program was initially intended to serve two St. Paul magnet elementary schools, Jackson and Maxfield. However, because of reduced funding, the ECFE(K-3) program was only conducted at the Jackson elementary school. "Families and School Together" was designed to help strengthen families and to help parents assist in their child(ren)'s learning to increase school success and decrease alcohol and other drug misuse.

Targeted Populations

Most program activities followed the "universal access" philosophy. All children and their families at Jackson elementary school were invited to program activities. However, some activities were offered for groups with special needs, such as classes for Hmong and other Southeast Asian families.

The school is designated as a total Chapter 1 school because 75% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Efforts were made to encourage participation from families at believed to be most at-risk. Community liaisons were used to call families and invite to activities and school staff members made some referrals. No specific assessment tools were used to identify individual "at-risk" families.

Participating Agencies

This ECFE expansion project was mainly involved with St. Paul's Jackson elementary school and Family and Consumer Education, a St. Paul School family education and support program sponsored collaboratively by the St. Paul Technical College and Community Education.

The program also provided some programs in cooperation with other agencies. The Southeast Asian Access Saturday program was a collaboration of the expanded ECFE program, the city of St. Paul, the school district, and a number of Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Organizations and community organizations. This program was developed with the support of the Community Resource Program funds form the Governor's Year of the City initiative. Other agencies which participated in the expanded ECFE program were the local

Participating Agencies, Cont.
YMCA, a local church ministry called "Loaves and Fishes," a local bank, the ECFE Frogtown Family Resource Center, and the St. Paul Public Library. Program staff also cooperated with Ramsey County Human Services to provide information about jobs, health, and welfare to Southeast Asian families whose children attended Jackson elementary.

Varied relationships were formed with these participating agencies to deliver programs. For some events the Expanded ECFE program would schedule and make arrangements and other agencies or groups would deliver information and other programming; for some other events roles were reversed.

Advisory Group
There was a special ECFE (K-3) Advisory Council. The purpose of this council was not to create a new structure, but to connect the organizations and groups that would play major roles in the program. Advisory council members served as liaisons with the organizations and groups they represented. Members were program staff, parents of K-3 students at Jackson, the principal the counselor, and teachers at Jackson, and representatives from community agencies and businesses. This fourteen member group met monthly beginning in January, 1991, to help develop strategies for implementing the program and recruiting and retaining participants.

Evaluation Process
On June 3rd, 1991, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in at Jackson elementary in St. Paul. During this visit, two ECFE staff, ten school/agency professionals, seventeen children and eleven parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to elementary school and other agencies
- Communication with elementary classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in St. Paul
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Monthly family activities starting in December: Gym night, Como Zoo Light Trip, Square Dance Night, Library Field Trip, Ice Cream Social and "A blast from the Past." First Grade preview, K-3 class-room field trips (skating and to Como Zoo), Family Fun subject matter events ("Make It - Take It"), Family Retreats on Saturdays.
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Southeast Asian Access series helped Southeast Asian parents learn about American culture and schools, including to prepare food from school lunches.
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Hmong Parent/Child Class helped adjustment to American culture and enhanced parent/child relation-ships. "Loaves and Fishes" served evening meals to families in need. The class provided information on parenting skills, and opportunity for parents to share concerns and receive support. Parents and children made breakfast together in Breakfast Club followed by parent discussions of parenting topics.
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Provided in conjunction with educational sessions. ECFE Frogtown Family Resource Center nearby Jackson school. Laminated world and U.S. maps.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Limited use because of staff limitations
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used
Other	Kindergarten Preview provided parent/child interaction activities followed by parent discussion and children's story.

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- Flyers sent home with children in kindergarten through third grade classes
- Children were not allowed to attend particular events without parents or guardians attending
- Community Liaisons to contact families to come to events
- School staff referrals
- Wide range of activities offered. Some program activities were offered universally and other activities for groups with special needs.
- Activities and classes were offered free of charge. Provided food and childcare for most activities.
- Emphasized fun in most activities and events offered.
- Varying times of the day of program offerings

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- School population characteristics identified school population with a high percentage of children and families with factors considered to be at risk
- School staff including classroom teachers, counselor, and social worker could refer children and families to program activities
- Community Liaisons contacted selected families to events and classes
- Providing food, childcare, and transportation, if necessary, in addition to not charging for program activities was done to reduce barriers for some families
- Because program staff members were not actually part of the school, some families may have been more receptive to their activities and invitations.
- Varying times of the day of program offerings
- Some activities offered for groups with special needs. Meeting some of the special needs of particular groups, i.e. interpreters, limited print materials.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

According to the K-3 ECFE staff, the expanded program was different than the typical ECFE model. They view the typical ECFE model as more middle class than the children and families attending Jackson school. The K-3 expansion program developed topics and activities thought to be important for families whose children attended Jackson. The parent/child interaction model used in 0-5 ECFE was used in the expanded K-3 ECFE program, in addition to a variety of other formats and activities to attract families to involved in the program. According to some of the professionals interviewed, 0-5 ECFE does more outreach and does more parent/child activities, and the K-3 ECFE does more activities that usually, but not always, requires a parent or guardian to attend.

This K-3 ECFE program was not closely connected to the 0-5 ECFE. This K-3 program is conducted via Family and Consumer Education (FCE) which is a joint program of Community Education and the St. Paul Technical College. Staff were not aware of families in the K-3 program would had attended 0-5 ECFE programs. Three of the eleven parents surveyed, had attended ECFE programs before their child(ren) entered school.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- K-3 classroom teachers and other school staff referred families to K-3 ECFE program.
- The school curriculum coordinator helped develop program activities and promote the program to school staff and families.
- The principal, counselor and classroom teachers from Jackson elementary school served on the advisory committee.
- K-3 ECFE used regular classroom space for some activities.
- K-3 classroom teachers helped plan events.
- K-3 ECFE program provided support to and supplemented classroom teachers' activities, such as in conducting classroom field trips. The K-3 ECFE program arranged transportation, food (if necessary), and child care for younger siblings for these classroom field trips.
- Kindergarten teachers presented part of the Kindergarten Preview to parents.
- All of the ECFE K-3 staff and other professional agreed or strongly agree that the program had the support of K-3 teachers and that classroom teachers promoted K-3 ECFE classes.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers
All of the ECFE K-3 staff and other professional agreed or strongly agree that K-3 ECFE staff and K-3 classroom teachers communicated about events. Communication between these staffs seemed to be vital to carry out the number of activities conducted and to get the participation most activities obtained. In addition, K-3 ECFE staff provided in-service presentations at school staff meetings.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems
Activities of the K-3 ECFE program did not appear to be directly connected to alcohol and other drug prevention. Six out of ten K-3 ECFE staff and other professionals surveyed indicated they did not know what specific prevention strategies were used. K-3 ECFE staff did comment that they believed the program provide a quality family interaction time and a healthier environment to build children's self esteem and discourage alcohol and other drug use.

Four of the eleven parents surveyed indicated that the K-3 ECFE program helped them talk to their child(ren) about alcohol and other drugs and send a strong no-use message.

A number of prevention programs such as *Children Are People* and *DARE* are conducted at Jackson elementary, but there was not a connection to the K-3 ECFE program.

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Resources for parent activities; money and staff

2 Parents feel comfortable coming into school

3 Support for teachers; the program did arranging, got parents, childcare, etc.

4 Have fun being with child(ren), family time

5 Parents contributing; being able to help

Getting information about child development; parent education

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1a Show children that parents are interested

1b Gives parents quality time to spend with child(ren)

1c Helps parents share ideas and concerns; don't feel so alone

4a Helps out financially; wouldn't be able to do activities with kids

4b Builds solidarity with school

Unexpected Benefits
Participants in focus groups and interviews were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

The positive impact the program had on children.

Many parents were involved in program activities. Lots of dads in certain activities.

More at risk families involved at school.

Teachers and parents saw each other in a different light. Program helped make teachers more aware of the value of parent involvement in child(ren)'s development. "The program provided something that teachers couldn't."

Support from staff members and from community groups (bank, businesses, etc.)

The program opened up many possibilities for parent involvement.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-3) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

The response from parents. The numbers of people who turned out for field trips.

Praise from classroom teachers.

The impact on children. Becoming more involved and visible at school, more comfortable, more verbal, more self assured.

Support from the community.

Benefits, continued

Children
Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

We learned things.

"I wanted to come. It was something to do."

"Went roller skating with Dad. We got to talk."

Mom and dad can do things with me.

We got to work on things.

Barriers

Advisory Committee
Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-5) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Lack of involvement of people who live right in community, near school

2 Coming to school for some parents

3 Getting parents to understand the program (P.R.)

4 Language differences

5 Haven't reached as many at-risk families

Parents
Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Help parents understand educational opportunities for their children (including magnet school); also opportunities for activities.
- Important to involve school staff.

Barriers, Continued

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

There were no responses by children about changes.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Be more aware of other resources and how to access them to assist parents with these resources (i.e. opening a checking account)
- Have a program for Black (Afro-American) parents
- Have a school liaison who thoroughly understands the program and communicates well
- Start earlier in the school year
- Have a parent educator who is from a minority group. More minority involvement.

Comments and Reflections

Strengths

- A wide variety of events or activities to attract participants with different interests. Program seemed successful in getting participation by fathers in certain program activities.
- Support for the program from cooperating groups and communication and between groups. Given the time this program was operating, many lines of communication were very well developed and the program received much support.

Areas for Improvement

- Home visits may be a useful strategy to promote participation for some individuals

Waseca
"Home-School Partnership"

Program Coordinator:	Karen Krause and John Jensen
Address:	Waseca ECFE 605 - 7th Ave. N.E. Waseca, MN
Phone Number:	(507) 835-5626
Evaluation Site Visit:	May 17, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview
The Waseca ECFE program serves the three elementary schools within the Waseca School District (Hartley, Southside and Sacred Heart). The "Home - School Partnership" program was designed to enrich and expand students' knowledge base, encourage parental involvement, improve and enhance family communication, and increase communication between school and families.

Targeted Populations
This program followed the philosophy of "universal access". All parents and families of children in grades K-3 were eligible to participate, and all potential participants received information about the program. Special efforts were made to recruit children and families for special support/education groups that focussed on stress, school or family concerns. District specialists (counselors, special education and classroom teachers), Waseca County Social Services and the Interagency committee supplied referrals concerning families who they felt would benefit from program components. No specific criteria or assessment tools were used to identify "high risk" families.

Participating Agencies
One of the major strengths of this program is the number of agencies and groups who have participated in this project. The "Folk Art Fair" alone drew over 50 individuals or groups who participated in conducting this one-night event. Other agencies or groups involved in providing direct assistance to this project are the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Waseca Area Hospice, Community Education, the Austin Resource Center, and the Youth Service and Leadership program.

Advisory Group
A special ECFE (K-3) Advisory Group was created to assist in planning K-3 activities. The advisory group was comprised of eleven people representing parents, faculty, administration and community. They met monthly throughout the grant period.

Evaluation Process
On May 17th, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Waseca. During this visit, five ECFE staff, fourteen other school/agency professionals, twelve children and nine parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 school and other agencies
- Communication with K-3 classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Waseca
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Fun nights, including the "Indoor Game Jamboree" and the "Teddy Bear Band." The Folk-Art Fair was a culminating activity. Seven parent-teacher inservices were held.
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Not used.
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Parent/child classes were held on cooking, woodworking, puppetry, and science
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	"Kids Koping" and "Family Change" classes were held to help parents help their themselves and their children through difficult times
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	"Kids Koping" and "Family Change" classes were held to help children cope with stress, school or family problems, and family change, including loss, death, divorce, friendships and moving
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	A parent resource center was set up in each of the three buildings with books, videos, and educational games. A resource guide was created with the leadership of the Home-School staff.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Home visits were used on a limited basis to encourage participation
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used, except informally as a part of the "Kids Koping" and "Family Change" classes
Other	Open gym night was held monthly. Volunteer programs were initiated, including: "Playground Partners", Chess Club" and "I Love To Read" parent volunteers. "Koffee Klatches" were hosted for parents and teachers.

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- The courses were offered at a low cost, and scholarships were given to eliminate any possible economic barriers.
- Written methods were used to promote the program, including brochures, flyers, newsletters, newspapers and the ECFE Catalogue.
- The staff worked hard to get the kids excited and motivated to bring their parents. Popcorn and juice parties were held for classrooms that had the most parents involved in classes.
- Good communication was established between the ECFE staff and classroom teachers.
- The staff tried many different formats, times and topics to get a wide variety of families involved and to find out what was the most effective.

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- The program reduced barriers to participation by helping to resolve transportation, childcare, meals, tuition, scheduling and site problems for parents)
- Staff worked with counselors and teachers to make a list of "high risk" youth. This list was used as a ongoing tool for special efforts to encourage these families.
- Repeated phone calls and limited home visits were seen as essential to encourage participation among "high risk" families.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

Of the nine parents we surveyed and interviewed, six had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.

- This program uses the same parent/child interaction format as does the 0-5 ECFE program.
- Those parents who have attended before are used to the format, and there is a comfortable, easy working relationship with the parents and children who are 0-5 ECFE "grads"
- There is a stronger link with the elementary school.
- Grandparents are more involved.
- There is a stronger emphasis on recruiting "high risk" families, and it is easier to do so with the elementary school's involvement.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- Intentional efforts were made to support and enhance the child's curriculum. ECFE(K-3) staff and classroom teachers worked together to identify topics and resources and to and encourage volunteer participation in the classroom.
- Parent/teacher "Koffee Klatches" were tried on a pilot basis in three schools. Parents were encouraged to come and meet informally with teachers.
- The program was inter-generational. It involved retired seniors and high school volunteers as volunteers in the ECFE(K-3) program activities and in the elementary classrooms.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers

- ECFE(K-3) staff members made several presentations at elementary school faculty meetings.
- Joint inservices were held for parents and teachers.
- Informal and formal contacts were made with teachers and administrators. As one administrator said, "This is a highly visible program. There is always something on my desk about it".
- A survey was sent out at the beginning of the program to school staff to identify needs.
- Teachers are on the advisory board and some actively work at events.
- ECFE(K-3) staff use regular classroom space
- School staff sent home notes with children about the programs.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems

Support/educational groups ("Kids Koping" and "Family Change") dealt with alcohol and other drugs as a part of the stress children face, and as one element of change. The other classes, special events, and parent/teacher inservices appeared to stress general parenting skills, and did not focus specifically on alcohol and other drugs. One parent suggested on the parent questionnaire that "Staff need to include people from alcohol and other drug background (like AA) as well as people who have "read" about it. Another stated, "Some staff need to become more comfortable talking about drugs and alcohol and family interaction."

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top ones listed in order of priority:

1 Quality and quantity time between parents and child.

2 Parents support each other

3 Creates a link with home and school staff

4 Benefits those who come even if the numbers were small

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Expressing/sharing feelings with other adults; identify with others.

2 Better communication between parents and children

3 Interaction of parents and children. Both are involved.

4 Financial aid that was available

5 Childcare provided

Support among parents and children

Children making friends

Benefits, Continued

Unexpected Benefits
Participants in focus groups and interviews were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

Many of the staff and faculty commented on the link between school and outside resources. This program was seen as a catalyst for other things going on in the community.

Administrators have observed more parent participation in school activities or attendance at special events. Sometimes both parents are in attendance.

Parents are now volunteering on the playground.

This project is intergenerational - from elementary age children through high school students through senior citizens.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-3) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

Registration, attendance.

Better parenting by "at risk" families.

Parents and children are able to communicate about issues.

More fathers getting involved.

Children
Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

"I liked...playing outside, snacks, our teacher, snacks, crafts, playing games."

"We could take things home, cause you can't at school."

"We got to do lots of activities. There was a lot of neat stuff to do."

"It was awesome, fun!"

Barriers

Advisory Committee
Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Lack of awareness of importance of being there; or knowledge of the program

2 Existing decline in parental involvement as children get older

3 Scheduling conflicts

4 Interagency communication and cooperation (confidentiality and turf)

5 Fear of attending, being threatened (even though this may be less threatening than other approaches)

Space has been a major issue for ECFE staff

Parents
Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Hope this program will continue.
- Liked the involvement of the family (parent) educator.
- Need smaller groups or more time for discussion.
- Need more than 8 sessions.
- Confidentiality is important.
- Make information consistent, between the schedule and what the children bring home. Clearly mark sections in catalogues so people know what fits for them.
- Increase public awareness of the programs through the media

Children
Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

Softer chairs!
More food.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Make other school staff more aware of the program
- Have more publicity with the media
- Contact and connect with divorced parents who are living out of town; invite them to become involved in some programs
- Expand this to K-4, and eventually move the program into the middle school level
- Conduct more home visits and other outreach efforts

Winona
K-3 Expansion Grant Program

Program Coordinator: Karen Fawcett

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Phone Number: (507) 454-9438

Evaluation Site Visit: May 22, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview

The Winona ECFE(K-3) program serves children and families in Jefferson and Washington-Kosciusko (W-K) elementary schools. The K-3 expansion program was modeled after the 0-5 Winona ECFE program and included a wide variety of components to reach all types of families.

The premise of the program was that poverty, illiteracy, abuse, neglect, family stress and chemical abuse are "at the deeper roots of school failure" and families who overcome these will be more active in their child(ren)'s education. The program built on the strengths of individual family members.

Targeted Populations

Some activities and classes offered by this program were open to all families. Certain activities and classes were targeted to particular population groups. Referrals were based on four types of problems for children: 1) aggressive, noncompliant behavior; 2) a life crisis such as death or divorce; 3) neglect or lacking parental supervision; and 4) depression or withdrawal. Nearly one-half of the families served in this K-3 Expansion program were referred by elementary schools. Both Jefferson and Washington-Kosciusko elementary schools have higher percentages of at-risk families. Both are Chapter 1 schools and have families from low income housing projects, apartments, and mobile home parks. County and other community agencies were also able to refer families to the K-3 ECFE program.

Participating Agencies

The Winona K-3 ECFE Expansion program worked through an intensive and diverse collaboration with other agencies to meet the need of families in the targeted areas. Many agencies assisted in the development of the K-3 Expansion Grant proposal, including Key Kids (a school-age childcare program), Winona County Human Services Department, the Community Education Department and the Adult Literacy Program the Winona Schools (ISD #861), Women's Resource Center, and the United Way of Greater Winona Area.

Participating Agencies, Cont.
In addition to the participating schools (and the Winona Schools Department of Special Education), other agencies either providing referral to or receiving referrals form the K-3 ECFE program were: Winona County Community Health and the Public Health Nursing departments, Minnesota Department of Corrections, Catholic Charities, Women's Resource Center, Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center, Head Start, Winona Volunteer Services, Winona County Extension Service, Community Memorial Hospital, Family Services of Winona, Winona Counseling Associates, Winona Counseling Clinic, and the YMCA.

Many community agencies helped in the training of the Home visitors. The K-3 Expansion Program helped co-fund an English as a Second Language (ESL) Summer School with a Way To Grow Grant, the Winona Literacy Project, and the United Way Project of Greater Winona Area. The School was for parents and children of Hmong, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Hispanic backgrounds.

Advisory Group
The Winona ECFE Advisory Council was restructured to add K-3 parents and functioned as the primary advisory group for the K-3 ECFE expansion program. The Parent Advisory Council had twenty-six members, including twenty-three parents, after two K-3 parents were in January 1991. These parents represented the broad spectrum of families in the school district. Originally, ten K-3 parents were to be added this advisory group, but difficulty occurred in obtaining parents from the families being served. Other members were the ECFE Coordinator, the K-3 ECFE Program Coordinator and the Community Education Director.

This council meets monthly except in December and July and has four committees: Library, Publicity, Fundraising, and Projects. It also met once during the grant period with the Agency Council whose members representing many community agencies. The Agency Council membership was expanded to thirteen members after receiving the K-3 ECFE Expansion Grant to include K-3 school and school-aged youth representatives. Both of these advisory councils report to the Community Education Advisory Council and the Board of Education several times during the year and operate under their supervision and authority.

Evaluation Process
On May 22nd, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a site visit in Winona. During this visit, six ECFE staff, seventeen other school/agency professionals, and fourteen parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. No children were interviewed. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to elementary school and other agencies
- Communication with classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Winona
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Weekend family camp-out at Whitewater State Park; Part of *ESL Summer School for Families* offered family trips to Myrick Park and Zoo, Whitewater State Park and Lake Park
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	*Family Literacy Classes* offered during school hours
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	*Families in Transition* (for families experiencing divorce or separation), *Parenting in Recovery* (for children living with chemically dependent parents), *Family Literacy Classes* (an additional class was held with an interpreter for Hmong families for whom English is a second language), and *ESL Summer School for Families*
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	No support groups just for parents. Elements of support groups used for parents in *Families in Transition* and *Parenting in Recovery* classes
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	No support groups just for children. Elements of support groups used for children in *Families in Transition* and *Parenting in Recovery* classes
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Provided in conjunction with meetings. ECFE Library was available to families with K-3 children. Materials for children and families of this age group were added to the library and promoted via flyers to all district elementary schools.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	Trained paraprofessionals visited at risk families weekly or biweekly. Interpreter provided for Hmong families.
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Offered during ongoing classes for parents and children. Referrals to cooperating agencies.
Other	Parents could be referred to 0-5 ECFE classes such as *Single Parent groups*, *Parenting in the Dark* (and other parenting skill classes offered through ECFE)

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- Flyers sent home in children's backpacks and promotional newsletters
- Informed parents in 0-5 ECFE programs of the K-3 Expansion program
- Word-of-mouth helped promote the program on an informal basis
- The reputation of previous ECFE efforts was viewed as strong in the community
- Home visits and inviting families to attend classes
- Solicited cooperation of the schools and social service agencies and encouraged them to make referrals
- Offered services and activities free of charge or at low cost, providing childcare and food (at some activities), and resolving transportation difficulties to reduce barriers to attending program activities

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- Selected schools with higher percentages of children and families with factors considered to be at risk
- Sought referrals from schools and social service agencies
- Used home visits to follow-up with referred families, identify needs, and recommend services, including other K-3 ECFE activities, if appropriate
- Provided an interpreter for home visits and classes with Hmong families
- Developed program models that work with high risk families
- Hired highly skilled and caring staff and provided additional staff development opportunities and ongoing in-service training
- Reduced barriers which might impair the ability of at risk families to attend activities by providing childcare and food (at some activities), transportation, and interpreters, (if needed), in addition to offering classes free of charge and making scholarships available for activities with a fee.

About one-third of the ECFE staff and other professionals surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that most parents in grades K-3 knew about the program. However, all agreed or strongly agreed that special efforts were made to recruit parents and children of at risk families.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds
Of the 10 parents we surveyed and interviewed, seven had attended ECFE programs before their children reached kindergarten.

The 0-5 ECFE program was viewed as having a very positive reputation in the community. The K-3 ECFE program was modeled on the 0-5 ECFE program its terms of philosophy and manner of working with families. The K-3 program was designed to focus more on at risk families than the 0-5 program, which touches all segments of the community.

The K-3 ECFE program also had more of a connection withe the school system. Home visitors worked with school/agency staff to create a team to assist families in need of services or at risk.

Staffing of the K-3 ECFE program varied from the usual characteristics of 0-5 ECFE staff and reflected the program's focus to the kinds of K-3 families it was serving.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-5 School and Other Agencies

- An elementary school counselor was used to work with the children in *Families in Transition* classes.
- Classroom teachers were recruited to teach in the *ESL Summer School program* program.
- Referrals were made by school staff to the K-3 ECFE program. According to the ECFE Coordinator, teachers at one of the elementary schools could make referrals directly or via the school counselor or principal. In the other participating elementary school referrals were made to the principal before passing on. Most of the ECFE staff and other professional surveyed though classroom teachers could refer families directly to the K-3 ECFE program. A significant percentage families and at risk families involved in the K-3 ECFE program were referred by the school.
- School and agency staff were members of the ECFE Agency Advisory Council.
- Most K-3 ECFE staff and other professionals agreed of strongly agreed that the program has the support of K-3 teachers and all agreed or strongly agreed that the program had the support of the school administrators.
- Meetings were held with community agencies. Most K-3 ECFE staff and other professionals view the program as being coordinated with other community services and agencies.
- K-3 ECFE staff felt that the cooperation among agencies, schools, and other groups, and the availability of their resources was a strength for this project.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers
In addition to the communication necessary for some of the cooperative activities listed above to take place, the following are some other means of communicating with K-3 classroom teachers.

- In-services were conducted to inform school staff about the K-3 ECFE Expansion program and its services. Information about referral process was also presented at faculty meetings.

- School staff generally got feedback on their referral to the program from the Home Visitor. A school nurse commented that she had received feedback on every referral she made. Most ECFE staff and other professional surveyed indicated that classroom teachers and K-3 ECFE staff share information about specific children and /or families.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems
The focus of the K-3 program was on helping at risk risk families reduce risk factors for their children, risk factors which may later lead to alcohol and other drug use problems. Reducing such risk factors can be a prevention strategy. One of the classes offered by the K-3 ECFE program, *Parenting in Recovery* dealt with issues of recovery, which included from chemical dependency.

Although there did not appear to be a formal connection of the K-3 ECFE program to the school districts chemical health program, the Chemical Health Coordinator saw the program as an asset to the school districts efforts by reaching at risk children and families. He saw the grant funding as a real advantage for chemical health efforts because it provided the types of activities to reach these families.

- All ten parents surveyed indicated that the program helped them set limits and boundaries for their children, and seven of the ten indicated that the program helped them be a good role model about their use or non-use of alcohol and other drugs.

- All of the K-3 ECFE staff surveyed though that the program helped parents with setting limits and being a good role model. Eleven out seventeen other professionals survey thought the program helped in setting limits and six thought it helped to be a good adult role model. Eight of the seventeen other professional staff indicated that they did not know what specific prevention strategies were used.

Benefits

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Seeing people in homes has assisted assessment process, making practical suggestions and meeting individual needs

2 Families taking charge of situation and their problems

3 Develop comfort or reduce barriers with school

4 Availability and visibility allows parents to come to individuals who can assist

5 Provided parental support and education to group not being served before

Provided a forum for finding out about American and Hmong culture

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Ability to break mold or cycle regarding parenting and family history

2 Emotional support for parents and children

3 Different methods of discipline, communication, and other parenting skills shown and learned

4 Gave children an opportunity to communicate with others about what was going on in their lives (methods and materials helpful)

5 Children feel better knowing other children are dealing with similar issues

Home visitors very supportive, beneficial, and innovative

Availability of library and community resources

Added to children's social skills

Benefits, Continued

Parents, continued

Hmong parents who had participated in K-3 ECFE program were interviewed separately through an interpreter. Listed below is a reflection of some their comments about the benefits of the program.

- Teaches how to take care of their kids at home and how to teach the children. Can ask questions.
- Children's stories and games help parents learn English, too.
- Home visitor helped fulfill need, i.e filling out form, scheduling appointments.
- Meet other parents, guest visitors, and Americans.
- New and educational experiences for both parents and children (field trips)

Unexpected Benefits

Participants in focus groups and interviews were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

The program delivered what it said it was going to deliver and did so promptly.

It helped support school special needs areas.

It could offer help to parents.

The program came at an appropriate time to help with increase in Hmong population in community.

Community agencies acceptance of the program.

Word of mouth in the community about the program. "Home visitors" became a household term.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-3) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

More interest shown by parents to be involved in school.

The mission is understood by the community.

The school and community are working with the program.

The staff feels good about what they are doing.

Seeing parent successes.

More involvement seen in the programs.

Follow-through and support for families.

Teachers see negative behaviors of children disappear.

Barriers

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-3) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Limited staff

2 Time constraints

3 Not reaching all parts of the community (rural areas)

4 Transportation difficulties

5 Lack of support from other family members and those close to them

Inadequate facilities

Parents
Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Needs to be made aware to others in the community (Public Service Announcements).
- Nice to have childcare and meals provided or available.
- Not charging makes programs so much more accessible.
- Opportunity for children to get support and for parent and child to have time.
- "It's helping me to teach my kids."
- Can't make it to higher education without early childhood education.
- Prevention is very significant. Better to spend money on prevention now, than on problems later.
- Continue program past grade three. Teenage issues are important, too.
- Continue the program next year.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Have two years as a minimum for piloting the program
- Have program in place when school year begins
- Be open to more parents
- More communication on what is happening in the program
- Provide more family field trips and a longer ESL family summer school

Comments and Reflections

- Home Visitors provided a link between families and agencies/schools. Many families were provided with services to help their family situation because Home Visitors were able to make connections. This type of personal contact seems to be a significant encouragement for some people getting appropriate services.

- Communication and cooperation among school staff, ECFE staff, and other agencies resulted in many families being referred for services.

- The program was successful in getting referrals and reaching at risk families. The factors listed above and the focus of class offerings contributed to this success.

- A variety of events or activities might attract participants with different backgrounds and interests.

Worthington
"K-1 Connection"

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Evaluation Site Visit: May 21, 1991

Introduction

Project Overview
The Worthington ECFE program serves kindergarten and first grade children and their families in Worthington's two public and two private elementary schools. The "K-1 Connection" program was developed to provide parenting education and promote parental involvement in their child(ren)'s education, particularly for parents with at-risk students.

Targeted Populations
This program followed the "universal access" philosophy. This program elected to be open to all families with children in kindergarten or first grade because the changes for children and their families during these grades are often great. Limiting the program to these grades was also done to keep the program focused and manageable.

Classroom teachers identified students at-risk and made referrals of families they felt could especially benefit from the "K-1 Connection" classes. It was not apparent that specific assessment tools were used to identify individual "at-risk" families. Some classroom teachers also did home visits with some of the identified families to help make families more comfortable with school staff members and to help teachers understand family situations.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) Coordinator visited Laotian, Spanish, and Vietnamese families and would refer them to the K-1 Connection program. Promotional material for the program were produced in Lao, Vietnamese, and Spanish for non-English speaking families.

Participating Agencies
The primary organizations involved in this project are the Worthington ECFE and the tow public and two private elementary schools in Worthington (District 518). In addition to the ESL program, mentioned above, there was cooperation with other community agencies to create an awareness of the program. Representatives from several community agencies served on the ECFE Advisory Council. The Nobles/Rock Health Service home visit nurse helped conduct an in-service making on home visits.

Advisory Group
A K-1 Task Force was formed to oversee the administration of the ECFE Expansion program. This group functioned like a subcommittee of, and reported to, the ECFE Advisory Council. The members of this task force were: three members from the ECFE Advisory Council, a kindergarten teacher, the school district's ESL coordinator, a Head Start parent involvement specialist, and a social worker from a local family service agency. The K-1 Task Force met three times during the grant period. The ECFE Advisory Council meets six times per year.

The task force advised and helped promote the program. The home visit effort was the result of a member's suggestion.

Evaluation Process
On May 21st, *Harding, Ringhofer & Associates* conducted a program review in Worthington. During this visit, two ECFE staff, ten school/agency professionals, six children, and twenty-one parents were interviewed and/or took part in a focus group. All adults were asked to complete a questionnaire.

This report includes information from the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires and is organized into the following areas:

- Program components
- Recruitment
- Comparison to ECFE programs for 0-5 year old children
- Connection of the ECFE Program to K-1 school and other agencies
- Communication with K-1 classroom teachers
- Connection to prevention of chemical use problems
- Benefits (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- Barriers (observations from the advisory group, parents, children and staff)
- School and Community Questionnaires (from ECFE & other professional staff)
- Parent Questionnaires
- Narrative comments from all three questionnaires

Program Components

This chart provides a summary of the activities that were used in the 10 Early Childhood Family Education K-3 Expansion Programs, with a notation about the components used in this program.

ECFE (K-3) Activities Used	Activities Used in Worthington
Special Events (a one-time activity or class that may include parents or children together or separately)	Not offered. (Although 5 of 21 parents thought they had attended special events.)
Ongoing classes for parents only (3 or more consecutive), with a primary focus on parenting education	Not used.
Ongoing classes for parents and children together (3 or more consecutive)	Classes were offered fall, winter, and spring at each public school. Each class had four sessions which met bi-weekly. Curriculum for children weekly theme based with age-appropriated activities complimentary to regular classroom activities. Topics for parent sessions were building children's self-esteem, developing responsibility, and child and home safety.
Parent Support Groups (special groups for parents only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used.
Child Support Groups (special groups for children only, with support rather than education as primary focus)	Not used.
Resource Materials (reading or audio-visual materials)	Provided in conjunction with meetings. Access to lending library. Parent materials were transported to schools during K-1 ECFE classes.
Home Visits (for recruiting, communication, or educational purposes)	ESL coordinator and translator visited non-English speaking families. (25 of 28 non-English speaking families visited.) Three kindergarten or first grade teachers also did home visits.
Family Counseling (counseling sessions offered by the program)	Not used.
Other	Translated all communication with K-1 parents into 3 languages (see above). Translators also available for home visits and classes, if needed.

Recruitment

General Recruitment Strategies:

- Brochures and flyers to promote program
- Letters sent home with K-1 students prior to the beginning of each class
- Articles in the "District 518 News" and the internal newsletter
- "K-1 Connection" newsletters
- Word of mouth
- Referrals form classroom teachers and ESL Coordinator
- Classes offered at child(ren)'s school and after school and in the evening (3:30 to 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.)
- Offering classes at low cost, which could be waived, and providing childcare at no charge

Efforts to Recruit "High Risk" Youth and Their Families:

- Referrals were sought from classroom teachers and ESL Coordinator
- Home visits conducted with non-English speaking families and other families to create a link between families and schools/agencies
- Used translators for communicating in written materials or verbally with non-English speaking families
- Reducing barriers which might reduce the ability of at risk families to attend classes by providing childcare and translators in addition to offering classes at a nominal fee or waiving the fee at convenient locations

Eight of ten ECFE staff and other professionals surveyed thought most parents in grades K-3 knew about the program. All agreed or strongly agreed that special efforts were made to recruit parents and children of at risk families.

Comparison to ECFE Programs for 0-5 Year-Olds

This program used the ECFE parent-child interaction model for the classes offered. According to K-1 ECFE staff, the concept, activities, and design are different. K-1 ECFE classes were located at the elementary schools, and ECFE (0-5) classes are offered at the ECFE Center. Some sessions of the K-1 ECFE classes were offered in the evenings to attract more fathers.

Jean Bastian served as coordinator for both the K-1 and the 0-5 ECFE program. Kindergarten and first grade teachers were used as child educators. Parent educators positions appeared similar in both the K-1 and 0-5 ECFE programs.

Staff thought the expectations of the K-1 participants were greater. K-1 participants had questions about the objectives and would ask for handouts. They would also would ask, "What is my child learning?" Staff also thought past ECFE participants were more at ease and more confident like "they knew what they were getting into." They seemed to be more open and willing to talk. Fourteen of the twenty-one parents surveyed, had attended ECFE programs before their child(ren) entered school.

Connection of the ECFE Program to K-3 School and Other Agencies

- K-1 ECFE classes were held in the public elementary schools.
- Classroom teachers could refer families directly to K-1 ECFE program.
- Classroom teachers promoted the program.
- Letters and flyers about the program were sent through the school to families with kindergarten and first grade students.
- K-1 ECFE Program Coordinator attended fall school open houses to explain program to parents.
- School district's ESL Coordinator and three kindergarten and first grade teachers conducted home visits where information could be provided about K-1 ECFE classes.
- A kindergarten teacher from a participating elementary school was hired as a child educator and a kindergarten teacher served as a K-1 Task Force member.
- Articles about the K-1 Connection were published in the *District 518 News* and the school's internal newsletter.
- K-1 Task Force had members representing Head Start and a family service agency.
- A nurse form a local health service agency provided in-servicing on making home visits.
- K-1 ECFE staff spoke at many community agency meetings.

Communication with K-3 Classroom Teachers

Because this ECFE expansion program focused on kindergarten and first grade, much of the communication necessary for many of the cooperative activities was with kindergarten and first grade teachers. Below are some additional methods used to communicate with K-1 classroom teachers.

- Letters were sent to kindergarten and first grade teachers informing them about the program and asking for their cooperation in recruiting families.
- K-1 ECFE staff made individual visits to all kindergarten and first grade teachers to inform them about the program and solicit their help in identifying at risk students.
- All the ECFE staff and other professional surveyed thought that classroom teachers and the ECFE (K-1) staff shared information about specific children and families.

Connection to Prevention of Chemical Use Problems
The K-1 ECFE staff felt that the classes helped to develop self-esteem, responsibility, and choice making in children, which could be beneficial to prevent chemical use problems later in life. There did not appear to be a formal link between the K-3 ECFE program to the school districts chemical health program. Five of eight K-1 ECFE staff and other professional surveyed indicated that the program helped parent to set limits and boundaries for children's behavior. Three of the eight were not aware of program using specific prevention strategies.

Fifteen of twenty-one parents surveyed felt the program helped them to set limits and boundaries fro their child(ren)'s behavior. One -fourth of the parents surveyed did not feel that this topic was necessary at the K-1 level since there is a DARE (Drug Awareness Resistance Education) program provided in grade 5. They also felt that the program surface values to let each parent decide how to prevent chemical abuse in their children.

Benefits

Advisory Committee
Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-1) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Increased communication between parent and child

2 Parental support

3 One to one with one child

4 Strengthen family unity

5 Parent education

Involves both parents

Relief of parental anxiety

Parents more familiar with school environment

Open to private as well as public schools

Drew in new participants; those with at-risk issues

Continuation of past 0 to 5 participants

Parents

Parents who had participated in the ECFE(K-1) program were asked to list and prioritize the benefits of this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Positive environment; change of scenery

2 Could not live without parenting session: therapeutic

3 Creativity time well thought out; gave kids an opportunity to work together as a team

4 Builds confidence and self-esteem in children

5 Parent to child one to one time; and opportunity to have time

Parent facilitator willing to get additional information (research topic or search for material if necessary)

Excellent materials for parents and children

Unexpected Benefits

Participants in focus groups and interviews were asked to comment about any unexpected benefits they had experienced as a result of this project. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but may capture some of the benefits that are not reported elsewhere.

Parents who wanted to repeat sessions.

The growth from early ECFE to K-1.

The openness and willingness of parents to talk.

The awareness and sensitivity developed for teachers who make home visits.

Participants in focus groups and interviews were also asked to describe how they would measure success of an ECFE(K-3) program in the future. This is a list of their ideas:

People come back that had been involved in the 0-5 ECFE program.

Positive feedback form parents.

Eagerness of children.

Parents getting to know their children and their capabilities.

Parents sharing problems.

Children

Children talked about what they liked about the program, and drew pictures to show what the classes were like. Here are a few of the ideas gleaned from talking with students:

A lot of games and a computer.

Playhouse. "Mom and I could read in it."

Circle time. "I got to hold hands with Mom. It felt good."

"I wanted to go to class even when i couldn't."

"If I missed I felt lonely and sick because I like it so much."

Mom and dad liked the class because I learned about things.

Barriers

Advisory Committee

Members of the advisory group for the ECFE(K-1) program were asked to list and prioritize any barriers they encountered in implementing this program. The following is their list with the top 5 listed in order of priority:

1 Getting and keeping at-risk families

2 Lack of parental commitment

3 Families lack of awareness of their own needs

4 Lack of experience and understanding with at-risk families

5 Working families; difficult to work around schedules

Cultural differences

Getting new families involved

Parents

Parents were simply asked to comment on "any messages they would like to give other facilitators of ECFE(K-3) programs." Asked this way, we felt that parents might feel more free to comment about any barriers they had experienced with their own program. (They are not prioritized.)

- Getting parents to program one time. They would be impressed.
- Important to have positive teachers who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic..
- Flexibility helps deal with concerns of parents.
- "Program has helped me be a better parent."
- Parents are helping other parents by providing support and new ideas.
- Parents who come help the community by improving parenting skills and informing others about the program.
- Parents say it is worth the effort, despite being another thing in their schedule.

Children

Children were asked, "If I could change one thing about this class, it would be..."

Have older kids' toys.

"Bring back the playhouse so Mom and I could read in it."

Change the playhouse into a haunted house.

More games and experiments.

What Would You Do Differently?
ECFE staff, other professionals, and parents were asked to comment about what they "would like to see done differently" if they could begin the project over again, or had funding to continue the program next year. This is a list of their ideas:

- Have more than one year for program. Could improve the numbers of people being served because much of the organizational efforts are done.
- Have a variety of services beyond offering classes. Have special events to attract more parents.
- Extend home visits
- Look at alternative ways to reach "at risk" families.
- Try to involve more "at risk" individuals in an advisory capacity
- Have audio and video materials and brochures in Lao, Spanish, and Vietnamese

Comments and Reflections

- Cooperation between K-1 school staff, K-1 ECFE staff, and other agencies contributed to the overall enthusiasm of people involved in this program.
- Classes offered at at variety of times and at child's school site gave families many opportunities to attend the classes and for parents to come to child's school.
- Much effort was put into reaching families for whom English was not their primary language by translating materials and making translators available for home visits and classes.
- A wider variety of events or activities might attract participants with different backgrounds and interests.
- Develop additional strategies to reach " at risk" families